THE BEST MAN

An Original Screenplay

by

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EXT./ INT. HARPER'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

It is late spring on a warm Friday evening of a Memorial Day weekend. HARPER STEWART, Black, 28, handsome, simply but fastidiously dressed, gets out of his Honda Accord with a weekend bag and bounds up the steps two at a time. He enters the building and heads straight to his apartment door. Before he can insert his keys, the door swings open revealing a slightly disheveled (food-stained blouse, tousled *au naturale* hair, ripped jeans), but extremely cute and adorable ROBIN JONES, 27. She is armed with a fork-full of colorful food.

HARPER
Robin! Baby, I got some great news!!

ROBIN
Try this. Tell me what you think.

HARPER
What is it?

ROBIN
Harper, just trust me.

HARPER
You know I don't like new . .

She shovels it in his mouth. He eats and he is surprisingly pleased.

ROBIN
Grilled ginger shrimp with orange-cranberry-mango chutney.

HARPER
You're serving Carribean food at a bar-mitzvah?

ROBIN
Yah, mon. Yah, mon.

She kisses him and pulls him inside of the apartment that is in more disarray than she is. Harper looks around at it and he is not pleased. He follows Robin back into the kitchen (another disaster area) as she attends to her pots.

ROBIN
Thanks for letting me use your kitchen. I nearly panicked when my stove broke, but then I remembered what a loving boyfriend I have.

Harper instinctively starts cleaning up the mess she's created, trying to regain some semblance of order.

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ROBIN
Sorry about the mess. I have like 3 jobs going at once here. It's crazy.

HARPER
Uh-huh.

ROBIN
So hey!! What's your news? What's the deallie, yo?

HARPER
Oprah wants Unfinished Business for her August book of the month club show.

ROBIN
Harper, you're kidding. Oh my God. Your first novel?

HARPER
(nodding)
When my agent said that she wanted - no, when Oprah Winfrey demanded - a preview copy, I got nervous. But she said that I impressed Oprah with that Esquire article I did on her last year. And she loved the book.

ROBIN
When's the release date?

HARPER
We go to print next month.

Robin squeals, jumps into his arms wrapping her arms and legs around his torso. She pelts him with kisses.

ROBIN
Oh, baby. I'm so happy for you!! That's so great. Ooops the callaloo.

She gets back to the stove for taste-testing as Harper brushes the remnants of Robin's food off of his urban-chic outfit.

HARPER
This is just the beginning, y'know? I still got plenty to do. Press releases, a 20-city book tour. All my shit's gotta be on point . . .

Robin belches loud. Harper pauses and furrows his brow.

ROBIN
Excuse me, little piggy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Harper resumes straightening up and looking uptight and disgruntled. Robin smiles at him admiringly.

ROBIN
Hey. Harper?

HARPER
What?

Robin looks at him with bedroom eyes and begins to purr like a cat. She unbuttons her blouse as she approaches him.

HARPER
What are you doing? People can see in here.

ROBIN
(still purring)
So, let them see.

HARPER
You're such an exhibitionist.

ROBIN
(purring)
So. I'm horny.

HARPER
You're horny?

ROBIN
You know how I get when you're excited.

HARPER
(Jamaican accent)
But wop'nin' wit de food, beauty?

ROBIN
Me say me tired o' shrimp, mon.

She sits him on on chair and straddles him. They kiss.

HARPER
Good. 'Cuz me 'ave no shrimp 'ere.

They laugh as they continue to kiss.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Highlighted by candles, sensuous jazz, and incense Harper & Robin (in post-coital relaxation) sip White Zinfandel and caress one another in a steaming-hot salt bath.

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CONTINUED: (3)

ROBIN
Mmmm. I missed you. I'm glad you decided to come back in town before you headed to DC.

HARPER
Yeah, me too, baby. Did I tell you I dedicated the book to Lance and Mia?

ROBIN
Um-hmm. That's sweet. You sound pretty excited for them.

HARPER
Hell yeah. We all been waiting for this day to come. Those two were made for each other.

ROBIN
(smiling)
I can't wait to meet your friends ..

HARPER
Did I tell you my agent said reviewers are already calling it the male Waiting to Exhale? I really gotta prepare myself . . .

ROBIN
Come on, Harper . . .

HARPER
What?

ROBIN
You never live enough for today. You've accomplished so much already. For once just enjoy the moment. At least for a little while. OK?

HARPER
Robin, if I start believing my own press too soon I won't make it out the gate. I've got to stay focused.

ROBIN
All work and no play makes Harper a very dull boy.

HARPER
Yeah, whateva, man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ROBIN
(mocking)
"Yeah, whatever, man." You're not feeling me, huh?

HARPER
I felt you getting your freak on.

ROBIN
Only with you, boo.

HARPER
Now that's what I like to hear.

ROBIN
(relaxed)
Mmmmm. Me too.
(sigh)
I could be like this with you forever, Harper.

HARPER
(freezing up)
What? What do you mean?

ROBIN
(laughing)
Relax. OK? All I mean is that I really like being with you. We fit together. And you said yourself that I'm the best girlfriend you've ever had. You've never been with someone this long or had this much fun.

HARPER
Yeah, but . . .

ROBIN
You love me don't you?

HARPER
Of course I do. But it's not that simple.

ROBIN
It is to me.

Harper is stumped for words as most men in this situation are.

ROBIN
Wow. Dead silence. Nice.

She gets out of the tub.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HARPER
Robin . . .

ROBIN
Nooo. Think I'll get some sleep.

She walks out of the tub and the door dripping water everywhere.

HARPER
Hey, put something on. You'll catch a cold. Someone's gonna see you.

Robin's closes the bedroom door. Harper puts a finger gun to his head and pulls the trigger.

INT. HARPER'S CAR -- DAY

Robin has the wheel and she's not the most skilled driver (think Annie Hall). Harper, in the passenger seat tries to figure out how to break the silence and keep calm amidst the erratic ride.

HARPER
Breakfast was great, honey.

Robin nods and smiles pleasantly. The awkward silence continues.

HARPER
Did you sleep well, sweetie?

Nodding again. Silence.

HARPER
So, how about those Yankees . . ?

ROBIN
Harper, It's okay. I know that you love me.

HARPER
I do, you know? Ooh easy on the gas.

ROBIN
I'm not an insecure person. But sometimes I have doubts. Especially with dishonesty and old girlfriends.

HARPER
Whoah, whoah. Hold up. Baby, I've been straight up with you from jump. And there's no old girl-friends that would make me leave you.

ROBIN
Really? Not even Kendall?

(CONTINUED)

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This strikes an uncomfortable yet familiar chord within Harper.

HARPER
We're not going there again are we?

ROBIN
I don't think it's so far off-base.

HARPER
It is. You're jealous of a character in my book . . .

ROBIN
Not just a character. An icon. An ideal: Your soul - Jackson's soul-mate. And she's nothing like me.

HARPER
She's not like anybody, Rob. She's an amalgam: a combination of a lot of women I knew in college. Why would I lie about that?

ROBIN
I don't know. That's what scares me.

HARPER
Well, here it is. Here's the drama. I thought I had finally avoided it with this relationship.

ROBIN
I'm not perfect, Harper . . .

HARPER
Let's just drop this please. Jesus.

ROBIN
Look, I'm sorry if I upset you. I didn't mean to get emotional. But I had to let you know how I feel . . .

HARPER
Are you still coming to the wedding?

ROBIN
Of course I am. Nothing has changed about that. I want you to have fun. Hang out with your boys, reminisce. I'll still be there on Memorial Day.

HARPER
Fine. Good. Great.

Robin looks sorry that any of this was brought up.

(more)

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EXT. La GUARDIA AIRPORT/ HARPER'S CAR -- DAY

They park at the entrance of the Marine Air Terminal for the Delta Shuttle. Robin stares at him.

ROBIN
I really hope you get all that you want out of this weekend. Take care of "unfinished business" and close that chapter of your life.

HARPER
And what's that mean?

ROBIN
Just hear me out, Harper. Something is holding you back from "us". You haven't resolved something about your college days. Like maybe you have to prove something . .

HARPER
I don't have anything to prove, Robin. You're over-reacting.

ROBIN
Maybe I am with the book. Maybe. But not this. Whether we're going to be together or not, you should really let that go.

HARPER
With or without you, huh?

ROBIN
I don't want to be without you, Harper. But I'm not going to play the fool either.

Robin gets out of the car. Harper stews in disappointment.

EXT. La GUARDIA AIRPORT -- DAY

Harper stands with his bag staring at Robin.

ROBIN
(adorably)
Can I have a kiss?

After a beat Harper leans over and kisses her cheek.

ROBIN
Damn. No lip action, huh?

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CONTINUED:

HARPER
You're gonna be late, Rob.

ROBIN
OK. I love you.

HARPER
I know.

She exhales and shrugs her shoulders. She gets back in the car and Harper watches her drive away. He goes inside the terminal.

INT. PLANE (FLYING) -- DAY

Harper opens his bag and comes across the latest issue of Sports Illustrated with a post-it note that says (with a smiley face) "Thought you might enjoy!! Love you." Harper shakes his head and tries to resist smiling as he inspects the cover. It is a football player, in a Washington Redskins uniform making a Heisman pose. This is LANCE SULLIVAN. In the photo he walks across a replica model of the US/ Canadian border, and the headline reads "HOME AGAIN, AT LAST - Redskins snag Lance. Sullivan back from the Canadians". Harper smiles admiringly at it. As he flips through it he gets very pensive.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen we are making our descent to our nation's capitol. Please pull your seat backs up . . .

He snaps out of his daze, to see some familiar surroundings out of the window. He anxiously packs his things up with a smile.

INT. NATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

Standing at the gate is a husky Black bohemian who looks like he's straight out of page 17 of the Spring J. Crew catalog. This is JULIAN MURCHISON aka MURCH, dreadlocked and bearded but well groomed. He searches the crowd of passengers for Harper who emerges from the crowd. Murch beams when he sees him.

MURCH
Harper!!

Harper smiles as he picks up the pace toward him. They hug.

HARPER
Murch, my man. What's up?

INT. MURCH'S TRUCK -- DAY

Murch and Harper drive down Highway 395 alongside the shimmering Potomac river.

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MURCH
I had to take a gun away from one of them last week.

HARPER
Damn! Shortys are wild today. Well, at least you got a summer to get them off your mind.

MURCH
No sir. We just got a grant to continue through the summer.

HARPER
I thought you were taking the bar.

MURCH
I'll make time. The kids need me.

HARPER
Didn't that firm in Silver Spring offer you . . ?

MURCH
A six-figure salary? Yes, they did.

HARPER
Murch, if you're gonna be stressed you should at least get paid for it.

MURCH
Brother, I know. I wrestle with that everyday. This was not my parents' plan. But I can't abandon my people.

HARPER
Julian Murchison: the steadfast champion for the disenfranchised.

MURCH
Ha, you sound just like Shelby.

HARPER
Ah. Shelby.

They ride in awkward silence for a few moments.

HARPER
She get into the FBI yet?

MURCH
One more test and she'll be in.

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
Riiight. She'll be a great agent. She's . . . headstrong. Take charge.

MURCH
You think she's a domineering bitch?

HARPER
(taken aback)
What? I never said that.

MURCH
Well, isn't that how you feel?

HARPER
(hesitant to answer)
Well, Murch you know we all felt she was a bit ... pushy - to a degree.

MURCH
How can you say that? You and I were always the stable ones, Harper. We always had girlfriends.

HARPER
I had girlfriends. You had a Shelby.

MURCH
But you know I like strong women.

HARPER
Like Audre Lorde, right?

MURCH
(reluctant)
Yes.

HARPER
And what's that quote of hers you always tell the kids? "If you allow yourself to be crushed" -no. "If I allow myself to be eaten" . ?

MURCH
"If I didn't define myself for myself I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive".

Harper looks at him as if to say "get my meaning?"

MURCH
You are lucky I love you like an adopted brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER
I know I know. Come on, man. Shelby's cool. In her way.

MURCH
Well, you certainly did not make her any kind of cool in your book . . .

Murch freezes as Harper looks at Murch incredulously.

MURCH
Uh, I mean . . not like I read it . .

HARPER
You read my book, Murch? How did - What are you doing with my book?

MURCH
(panicky)
I don't have it. Jordan does.

HARPER
Jordan's got my book?

INT. BLACK ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION (B.E.T.) STUDIOS -- DAY

In the control booth directing the taping of BET Teen Summit is JORDAN ARMSTRONG, a confident, sophisticated, beautiful, sexy young woman who is in total control of her surroundings.

JORDAN
Camera 2 zoom in on the young lady in lime green with the finger waves. Not too fast. Good. Alright, Larry? Let him know he's got 30 seconds before commercial.

A production assistant shows Harper and Murch into the adjoining "green room". Murch thanks her as Harper, upon seeing Jordan brushes his hair and his clothes with his hand instinctively. He can't take his eyes off of her.

HARPER
She's already running shit, huh?

MURCH
You should not be surprised. You know how gung-ho she is. She is the only one more driven than you are.

Harper looks at her with reverence and Murch observes it.

MURCH
When's the last time you saw Jordan?

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HARPER
(still looking)
Back in December. She was producing a music video for Brandy and VIBE had me cover it. But we didn't really spend much time. Y'know, I had a deadline, she had a . . .

Harper turns around and stops in mid-sentence when he discovers Murch staring and smiling at him.

HARPER
What? What, nigga?

MURCH
You, my brother, have been withholding information.

HARPER
Ohhh, here we go . . .

MURCH
You two got busy in undergrad didn't you?

HARPER
No, Murch. No.

MURCH
What about the book? Jackson and Kendall - that's you two, I know it. They seized a prime opportunity to make grass sandwiches: "A passionate night of love-making so intense that made them dizzier . . "

HARPER
Embellishment sells books, Murch.

MURCH
So what really happened?

HARPER
Nothing.

MURCH
You are lying!

HARPER
See? You should be in court cross-examining folks.

MURCH
Come on. Out with it.

Harper lets out a sigh and rolls his eyes at Murch.

INT. CAMPUS NEWSROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

In a messy campus newsroom. Harper works on a computer and Jordan studies at a separate table. They are alone. The room is only lit by their two desk lamps.

HARPER (V.O.)
Senior year during finals. The year-end issue was off to the printer and the staff had left for the night. We stayed because we both had studying to do. But we were mad tired . .

Harper takes a swig of coffee. Jordan downs some caffeine pills with a diet coke. Despite that they are still nodding off.

Then Jordan wakes from her desk with a start at the sound of Stevie Wonder's "As". She turns to see Harper turning up the volume on the office stereo. She smiles and gets up.

They sing the words to one another and start dancing, laughing and acting silly. Harper kisses Jordan on her forehead.

They hug one another in their playfulness and then pull apart from one another and look at each other, and start kissing each other passionately, hungrily. They rub and fondle over each other with urgency.

INT. B.E.T. STUDIOS (GREEN ROOM) -- DAY

Murch sits in bewilderment at the story.

MURCH
And you didn't tell us?

HARPER
There wasn't really anything to tell. Besides, you know you can't keep a secret.

MURCH
What do you mean I can't keep a secret?

HARPER
Were you supposed to tell me you had my book?

MURCH
(can't deny it)
Just finish the story.

INT. NEWSROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan unbuckles his belt, Harper nibbles on her earlobe and searches for the clasp on her bra. They are set to bone!

Then the CD skips, repeatedly and they get distracted. They break from one another and look over at the stereo equipment. They look at one another and seemingly have come to their senses. Jordan walks away from Harper and he just stands, clearly wanting more.

HARPER (V.O.)
It was the strangest thing. Looking back it's one of those moments you wish you could have back. But at the time it wasn't right.

INT. B.E.T. STUDIOS (GREEN ROOM) -- DAY

Jordan wraps up the show. She shakes hands with the staff as the production assistant who showed Harper and Murch in points them out to Jordan. She sees them and Harper looks especially handsome to her. After a pause she grabs her bag, turns away from the window that separates them, and straightens herself out. In the foreground Harper talks to Murch.

MURCH
I am not getting it. Why?

HARPER
Well, it was the end of the year. She was taking that internship in LA. I was moving back home. It just wouldn't have gone anywhere. It would've been too much . . .

MURCH
You two are ridiculous.

HARPER
What?

MURCH
In other words the two control-freaks could not lose control and get freaky. Right?

HARPER
Y'know. I'd almost forgotten how corny you could be. Almost.

MURCH
I thought that was a pretty good play on words . . .

INT. B.E.T. CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

As Harper and Murch continue talking Jordan takes a breath and makes sure that her clothes and hair are together. Then she releases her tension.

JORDAN
Stop it. No big deal. This is my boy. This is business.

A carbon copy of Jordan appears behind her smoking a cigarette and looking ten years older. This is Jordan's mentor, ANITA.

ANITA
Good job, Jordan. Keep it up.

JORDAN
(caught off-guard)
Oh, thanks, Anita. It was OK. I think can do better with . . .

ANITA
(indicating Harper)
Is that him?

JORDAN
Oh. Yes. Yes indeed. That's Harper Stewart. Lance Sullivan's best man.

ANITA
Mmmm. You sure we can't get a camera into that wedding? It could be huge.

JORDAN
I know. I'm still trying, but they've been pretty adamant.

ANITA
Keep trying.
(looking at Harper)
Your boy is kind of cute.

JORDAN
We're just friends, y'know?

ANITA
Uh-huh. You ready?

Before Jordan can respond, Anita swoops in on Harper introducing herself and making small-talk. Jordan looks at her for a moment, then grabs her things and follows.

INT. B.E.T. STUDIOS (GREEN ROOM) -- DAY

Harper looks at Jordan as she enters with her on-cue smile.

JORDAN
What's up, Harper?

HARPER
Hey.

ANITA
Harper, I've always enjoyed your writing. But that book of yours, wow! You nailed it. And your girl here -talk about a fan- she has her nose in that preview copy every free moment she's got.

Harper looks at Jordan with raised eyebrows and a smile.

JORDAN
It's my job to keep up with what's current.

HARPER
Of course.

ANITA
Harper, can we get you on Teen Summit or profile you on Night Talk with Tavis?

HARPER
Sure, I'd love to.

ANITA
Great. We'll even get Jordan to produce it. What d'you think, J?

JORDAN
Why not? We have the inside track.

ANITA
This is going to be fabulous. It was a pleasure meeting you both. I've got to run. Take care now, Harper.

Anita sweeps out of the room as swiftly as she came into it.

MURCH
Wow. I have never heard someone talk as fast as that.

HARPER
That's gonna be Jordan in awhile. Hard Copy's got nothing on her.

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CONTINUED:

JORDAN
Please. The publicity will not hurt you, honey. Don't front.

HARPER
Alright, Armstrong. So what's up, girl? I can't get no love?

JORDAN
Oh, hey. Sorry. How you doing?

She comes over and kisses him very awkwardly. Harper hugs her as if she were a long lost lover. She laughs nervously.

JORDAN
Yeah well. It's good to see you. So, like Anita said we want to get you in the studio.

HARPER
I'm all yours.

Harper stares at her but Jordan averts her eyes. Harper, noticing her apprehension gets a little uncomfortable himself.

JORDAN
Good. I'm done for the day. You guys ready to go?

MURCH
Sure.

JORDAN
Good. Come on let's be out.

Harper holds the door open for her. She walks past him, careful to avoid touching. Harper notices, but plays it off. Murch follows them.

INT. MURCH'S TRUCK (MOVING) -- DAY

Jordan sits in the back finishing a call on her cellular phone. Harper peeks at her in the passenger mirror as he checks his goatee.

JORDAN
Just tell them big country-ass Negroes we ain't serving no ham-hocks at the damn reception. Alright? Yeah, I'll see you later. Yeah, okay. Shit!

MURCH
Who wants ham-hocks?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN
Lance's uncles and cousins. This wedding shit never ends. Mia's cousins are getting on my nerves. Wanting to meet guys and shit . . .

HARPER
You should introduce them to Quentin.

JORDAN
I did. Big mistake. He got those poor girls open too. Charming motherfucker.

HARPER
It's what he's good at. If they gave college credit for it he'd have his Phd by now.

JORDAN
Well, Dr. Feelgood has your book.

Harper has a look of concern in his eyes.

HARPER
What? Quentin has my book now?

JORDAN
Yup. Your prep school homeboy swiped it right off my coffee table last week. I told him I wasn't supposed to have it, but you know Q doesn't follow anyone's rules but his own. Sorry.

She instinctively puts her hand on his shoulder and then swiftly pulls it away as if she had done something wrong.

HARPER
Oh, s'okay. No big deal.

Something clearly bothers him about Quentin having the book.

HARPER
Hey Murch, did he say where he was gonna be? I gotta discuss the bachelor party with him.

JORDAN
You got the right assistant for that gig. That boy's life is a bachelor party. I can only imagine what that night is gonna be like.

INT. STUDENT CENTER -- NIGHT

Bass-heavy reggae is heard as college seniors get their grinding groove on. In a DJ booth the devilishly handsome and hip-hop, QUENTIN SPIVEY spins records and is sweated by impressionable coeds. Harper, Jordan, and Murch walk in.

JORDAN
There goes Q.

They see him through the DJ's booth window.

HARPER
Be back in a second.

Jordan watches Harper like a hawk as he heads over to the booth.

MURCH
Want to cut a rug, Jordan . . ?

JORDAN
Why can't you keep your mouth shut?

MURCH
Sorry. But I don't think he's mad.

JORDAN
That's not the point! I told you . .

They ad-lib their debate as Quentin spies Harper through the booth. He smiles coolly and waves him in. Harper comes in as Quentin charms the co-eds out. The guys greet each other warmly.

INT. DJ BOOTH -- NIGHT

But once inside Harper and Quentin stand apart from one another staring: suspicious, and skeptical.

HARPER
What happened with that gig at The Post I got you?

QUENTIN
Shorty, you know that 9 to 5 shit ain't me. I can't be jockeying with other mafuckas to get the right shot. I'm a artist.

HARPER
Yeah. A bullshit artist.

QUENTIN
Awww don't player-hate, nigga. I read your book.

HARPER
Yeah, I heard. And?

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CONTINUED:

QUENTIN
You got skilz, joe. I can't front. You gonna blow the fuck up. Make me want be a writer and shit.

HARPER
Q, please . . .

QUENTIN
Naw, I'm serious, joe.

HARPER
Major change number what? 6? Thought you were finally graduating . . .

QUENTIN
Don't sweat that, joe. Seriously, tho' your shit is on point. But I think you might've exaggerated my character a little bit. I mean, my mama not being around ain't got shit to do with how I treat bitches.

HARPER
Why do you assume it's you I'm talking about?

QUENTIN
Give a nigga some credit, aw-ite? I ain't stupid. And I was more focused than that when I was in school.

HARPER
You're still in school:

QUENTIN
I'm sayin' tho, yo. You could've embellished a nigga some. I mean ain't that the buttery shit about bein' a writer? Rewriting history? Tailoring shit to your ideal self?

HARPER
What are you talking about?

QUENTIN
Oh, come on, "Jackson". Check it, right? If I was to write my book, I'd make my character like a actor or a world-class athlete. Something to justify the inordinate amount of pussy I get . .

HARPER
Right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

QUENTIN
Or I could make my character real respected for being responsible about his obligations; studying, graduating. Y'know? Live that fantasy out on paper?

HARPER
And oh what a fantasy that would be.

QUENTIN
. . . Or gloss over real scandalous shit from my past . . .

HARPER
That's a lot of gloss.

QUENTIN
Well, that's true.
(mischievous grin)
But I ain't got no monopoly on scandalous shit, nigga.

HARPER
(getting serious)
You better chill with that.

QUENTIN
"The frontal lobe", shorty?

HARPER
There's nothing there. Leave it be.

QUENTIN
Alright. But I don't know. That copy of the book being in town this weekend has got some weird energy, y'know . . ?

HARPER
Look, Dionne Warwick. Nothing's gonna happen if you just keep your mouth shut.

QUENTIN
All I'm sayin' is, it brought back wild memories. Shit I ain't thought about in years. Knowutumsayin'?

HARPER
(long pause)
Where's the book?

QUENTIN
At the crib.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER
Who else has read it?

Quentin shrugs as a loud consistent barking is heard; the sure sound of the biggest fraternity on campus: Alpha Kappa Omega (AKΩ). Quentin smiles. Harper glares at him as they exit.

INT. STUDENT CENTER COMMONS -- NIGHT

The undergraduates gather around to watch the young men trying to pledge the prestigious fraternity. They all dress similarly and stare straight ahead like soldiers as they march into the room. The "big brothers" inspect and scrutinize them thoroughly. Harper, Jordan, Murch and Quentin all come out to observe the show. One of the big brothers, WAYNE speaks:

WAYNE
Y'all some sorry mufuckas, I swear. Only real men get in this frat. It ain't a right. It's a privilege, goddammit. We need someone here to whip y'all bitch-ass pussy-footin' niggas into shape. We need a leader.

The pledgies start getting antsy. Harper shakes his head.

WAYNE
Don't bitch up now. If y'all so much as drip a bead of sweat when he gets here, that's yo' ass. Respect and revere mufuckas. LANCE SULLIVAN!!

The entire room explodes for LANCE SULLIVAN, a tall, handsome, chiseled out of stone, chocolate Black man, as he walks through a smoke and light show complete with cheerleaders. Lance is all business as he stalks over to his pledges. The coeds all point, stare, and gawk as Jordan leans into Harper.

JORDAN
That is a grandiose nigga.

HARPER
Are you kidding? L-Boogie? The BMOC? The HNIC? All time leading rusher in school history? Why wouldn't he be?

They watch as Lance gets menacingly close to a pledgie's face.

LANCE
You trying to pledge my frat, bitch?

PLEDGIE
A uh a . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE
(thru gritted teeth)
Did I tell you to speak, mafucka . . ?

Harper has seen enough and walks over to them as Lance hazes the pledgie. Harper steps into Lance's line of vision. His whip-cracking demeanor immediately gives way to a huge childish smile. He thunders out a yell and embraces Harper in a bear hug that lifts Harper off of the ground.

LANCE
Harp, my man!! My Brother!! What's up cat-daddy?!

HARPER
Not much, big fella.

LANCE
Wooo! These fools lucky you here. I'd be putting these mafuckas through the real wringer if it wasn't for you. Softening my mood and shit.

HARPER
Wedding kicking your ass?

LANCE
Dog, yes! The wedding, the contract negotiations. I'm stressed as shit.

HARPER
The best man is here to help out. I'm getting you over that broom no matter what. Even if it kills me.

LANCE
Not even the devil himself will stop Mia from becoming Mrs. Lance Sullivan, brother-man.

HARPER
I'm glad to hear it, L.

They laugh and smile as they join the rest of the crew.

JORDAN
Well, the bosom buddies kick it once again.

QUENTIN
Yeah, them fools are like a couple of pendulous titties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Just in time to break up the party comes a distinguished voice.

SHELBY (O.S.)
Juliiiiannnn!

They all deflate and groan at the sight and sound of SHELBY, Murch's nagging, golddigging, and controlling bourgeois girlfriend. Murch immediately downshifts into "honey-do" mode.

MURCH
Hi, Shel.

SHELBY
Well, hello, honey.

She air-kisses Murch and then turns to everyone else.

SHELBY
Well, well, well the gang's all here! Back in effect.

ALL
(in drab unison)
Hi, Shelby.

SHELBY
Well, nice to see all of you too.

She sees Harper.

SHELBY
Ah, Harper Stewart: Richard Wrong, Langston Snooze.

HARPER
How're you doing, Shelby?

SHELBY
I heard about your book.

Harper looks over at Murch whose eyes look elsewhere.

SHELBY
And I don't think it's cute. Listen, the next time you want to characterize me in one of your little projects, do me a favor.

HARPER
What's that, Shelby?

SHELBY
Don't!

Harper holds up his hands and backs off. She turns to Murch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SHELBY
Julian, drive me to Neiman Marcus would you? I can't decide on what I should wear for the wedding.

MURCH
I thought you were wearing . . .

SHELBY
No. I decided against that.

MURCH
But, Shel I have plans.

SHELBY
What kind of plans?

MURCH
Honey, I told you I was spending time with the guys tonight.

SHELBY
Oh, that can wait. You have all weekend. Only take a few hours.

MURCH
Shel . . .

SHELBY
Now you know how I value your opinion. You're always so good at helping me pick out things.

Murch hesitates and Shelby, seeing all his friends in support, gets an attitude.

SHELBY
Oh, I see. It's gang up on Shelby day. Fine, if you'd rather be with them than me. That's fine.

She starts to walk away and Murch has to make a move.

QUENTIN
Here it comes.

She whips around to address him, her bottom lip quivering.

SHELBY
(whining)
Am I being that unreasonable?

The crew roll their eyes in unison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HARPER
We'll see you in a few, Murch.

MURCH
Okay, guys I'll be there soon.

SHELBY
(perky)
Thanks dear. You're the best.
(serious)
Harper, I'm watching you.

She takes Murch by the hand and leads him out like a little kid.

QUENTIN
Damn! She be giving youngin' drama.

JORDAN
For real. How'd she know we were here? What is she? Part blood-hound?

HARPER
She got a lo-jack on that brother.

LANCE
Well, come on Harp. I'll show you the new house we bought. Mia'll be excited to see her "big brother".

JORDAN
Good. I gotta go too. The queen needs me.

HARPER
Bet.

Harper sees Quentin observing some senior honeys passing him by and he pursues them like a dog in heat.

QUENTIN
I'll catch y'all bourgie niggas at the crib later.

LANCE
Don't be late.

Harper watches Quentin and shakes his head before following Lance and Jordan.

INT. LANCE & MIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The three of them walk into the luxurious Potomac, MD home that isn't quite lived in yet. There are plenty of packing boxes and furniture draped in blankets, but Harper is clearly impressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
That 'Skins contract is fat, huh?

LANCE
Obese, player.

From the top of the stairs Lance's angelic fiancee, MIA floats down the steps heading straight for Harper and hugs him with all her might.

MIA
Ohhh, it is so good to see you, Harper Stewart. How are you?

HARPER
I'm good, Mia. You look great.

MIA
So do you.

LANCE
Damn, baby. How can you tell? You got him all hemmed up.

MIA
(releasing him)
Shut up, Lance. Don't pay him any mind, Harper.

LANCE
I don't see why you love that fool so much. He ain't shit.

She holds Harper's arm and looks into his eyes.

MIA
He's a true friend. Always there when you need him. Dependable. And he dedicated his first novel to us.

HARPER
You read my book, too?

MIA
No, but I heard great things.

Harper shoots Jordan a look. She returns a nonchalant shrug.

MIA
So when's that girlfriend of yours coming? I can't wait to meet her.

LANCE
Yeah, dog. You been keeping this one under wraps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
And with good reason. Bringing her around y'all might taint her image of me. But she'll be here Monday.

MIA
You're always so secretive, Harper.

Jordan observes Harper suspiciously. He holds Mia's hand with the engagement ring.

HARPER
Wow! Look at the size of that rock. I'll go blind just looking at it.

JORDAN
She's been doing finger curls just to lift that mug.

MIA
(laughing)
Stop it, y'all.

HARPER
L, Did you mortgage the house?

LANCE
Ha, ha, ha, mafuckas. There's nothing too good for my Mia.

Jordan and Harper observe Lance and Mia kissing lovingly.

LANCE
I love you, baby.

MIA
I love you, too, boo.

JORDAN
Would y'all please?! Tired of that "Leave it to Beaver" shit. Mia what do you need?

MIA
Girl, the caterer is tripping, the florist screwed up the order, and mama still can't find a dress . . .

JORDAN
Alright, come on. Superwoman's here.

LANCE
Hey, we ain't got all night. We got men stuff to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MIA
Lance, go away. Show Harper the rest of the house.

Mia pulls Jordan away and then looks back around at Harper.

MIA
It's really good to see you, Harper.

Harper smiles back at her. Lance takes him the opposite direction. Harper briefly pauses at a framed photo of Lance in the end zone praying after just scoring a touchdown. He smiles before following Lance.

HARPER (O.S.)
Front page, kid.

INT. SCHOOL NEWSROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

Harper takes this same photo to show Lance the new front page layout for the newspaper that features this photo and a feature story on "The Sophomore Sensation."

HARPER
We were gonna use the photo where you're dragging the 5 guys from State over the goal line, but this one tells it all.

LANCE
Ooohh. I know you had to fight the white boys about that. They always want that super-nigga shit.

HARPER
Yeah, but me and Jordan squashed that bullshit. Besides, it relates better to the article I wrote. Tells the students who you are.

LANCE
Surprised you took the holy road. You ain't the most spiritual brother I know.

HARPER
It ain't got nothing to do with that, kid. The story is all I care about.

LANCE
Uh-huh. You'll see. Someday you're gonna believe in my God. Our God.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
Yeah, whateva, man. So, yo what happened at Pittsburgh, kid?

LANCE
Dog! Twins. Two sets. Waiting for me at the hotel. Some agent hooked it up. Big ass titties, player. Like punching bags . . .

HARPER
Praise the Lord, and pass the panties, huh?

LANCE
Words to live by, dog.

They bust up laughing as Mia comes into the room.

MIA
Harper . . ? Oh, I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt, but here are the ads. And I even convinced Fridays to place one provided that they get the one next to Lance Sullivan's photo.

HARPER
Wow. You got Friday's? That's great.

Lance is impressed by what he sees and clears his throat.

MIA
I'm sorry. Hi, I'm Mia Myers.

LANCE
(mack-daddy vibe)
The pleasure's mine.

MIA
How nice. But what's your name?

HARPER
That's Lance Sullivan, Mia.

MIA
Oh, you're Lance Sullivan?

LANCE
In the flesh.

MIA
Nice to meet you. I apologize. I didn't recognize you. You look bigger on TV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Harper chuckles and Lance takes the comment in stride.

MIA
Harper, I've got to get to Econ, but I can take those deposits to the bank if you want?

HARPER
Sure. Thanks.

MIA
Nice meeting you, Lance. Oh, and great game on Saturday.

LANCE
You've seen me play?

MIA
Oh, yeah. I love the game.

Lance smiles at Harper who rolls his eyes.

MIA
But I think you'd get more yardage if you used your offensive line more. They're giving you the holes. Just run through them. And you would want to stop planting so hard on turf. Your knees won't make it to junior year if you keep that up.

Lance is taken aback and Harper chuckles again.

MIA
Think about it, OK? See ya.

She walks out and Harper breaks out laughing.

HARPER
She got you, mack-daddy.

LANCE
Hmmph. She bad. That you, player?

HARPER
Naw, just good friends. You know I don't shit where I eat. Plus, the word is she's saving it.

LANCE
Virgin? Really? You gotta hook me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER
With you?! Hell no. She's a sweet girl. And I'd like to keep her that way. She's on time, does her work ..

LANCE
Come on, Harp. She could be Mrs. Sullivan.

HARPER
So could those four freaks at Pittsburgh, bionic dick . . .

The two ad-lib a debate.

INT. LANCE & MIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Back in the present Harper ponders his memories as he watches Lance and Mia hug good night. Jordan waits impatiently.

LANCE
Come on, y'all. Let's go.

Harper breaks out of his daze and the three of them leave.

EXT. ADAMS MORGAN -- NIGHT

Lance waits in his Lexus SUV as Harper helps Jordan carry some things to her door. She still hasn't made eye-contact with him.

JORDAN
So, tomorrow. Let's let the station buy us brunch. Pick you up about 11?

HARPER
Splendid, Ms. Armstrong. That fits well in my schedule. Shall I call to confirm?

JORDAN
What? A sister can't be professional?

HARPER
Wooo, some things never change.

JORDAN
Change is overrated.

HARPER
Jordan, you know you could've asked me for a copy of my book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
What for? You wouldn't have given it to me.

HARPER
Yeah, that's true. But at least I'd know that you were still interested.

JORDAN
(knowing what he means)
Please. Don't play yourself. I just want the exclusive. Fuck Oprah.

HARPER
If that's all it is, how come you can't look me in the face?

Jordan looks right into his eyes.

JORDAN
Harper. Why'd you really leave your girl at home this weekend?

HARPER
(slightly off-balance)
I uh just wanted to hang with the fellas for a minute. Cut up a bit before she got here. That's all.

JORDAN
Uh-huh. Good night, Harper.

Jordan walks to her apartment and Harper smiles.

HARPER
Night, Jordan.

Lance beeps the horn. Harper watches her go into her complex and then he runs back to the car.

INT. QUENTIN & LANCE CRIB -- NIGHT

The fellas sit around the table eating Philly steaks, drinking brew, and bustin' Spades. Lance and Quentin pair up against Harper and Murch.

QUENTIN
We 'bout to run a Boston on y'all niggas. Y'all 'bout to be set.

MURCH
Do you always have to talk trash? You're worse then my kids.

CONTINUED:

HARPER
Quentin Spivey came out the womb jaw-jacking.

MURCH
Come on. It is just a game.

QUENTIN
That's what all punk-ass losers say.

LANCE
Easy, Mojo. Let the boy alone.

HARPER
Mojo! Shit. I ain't heard that name in a clip. Fuckin' Mojo.

QUENTIN
That's what I put on the ladies when I do my thing.

LANCE
Got 'em turned the fuck out, making breakfast, buying jewelry, and trying to figure why they do it because they really hate your ass.

MURCH
And then drop them like bad habits.

HARPER
He's got them singing, "Mojo, gimme once more chance. Gimme, gimme one more chance."

MURCH & LANCE
Uh-huh, uh-huh.

The fellas bust up laughing.

QUENTIN
I know you ain't talking about leavin' hoes strung out, Harper.

LANCE
Yeah, that's true, player. You the "serial monogamist".

HARPER
What?

QUENTIN
You be havin' girlfriends. Serious public relationships, like "This is my queen" and shit. But if she cross

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

QUENTIN (continued)
that boundary you set, she gone.

LANCE
Dismissed. With the quicks.

Fellas laugh at that and even Harper has to chuckle.

MURCH
That's only because none of them have ever measured up to Jordan.

QUENTIN & LANCE
Uh-huh. Excellent point, counsel Murchison. Well done. Sustained.

HARPER
Aww, get the hell outta here.

MURCH
You know it's true. Jordan is the best girlfriend you never had. You guys know they kissed in undergrad?

LANCE
Up in the newsroom senior year.

MURCH
You knew about that?

QUENTIN
Yeah, we knew about that shit.

Murch looks at Harper who just shrugs his shoulders.

QUENTIN
Nigga, you know you can't keep a secret.

MURCH
That is so messed up.

LANCE
So, is that the case, Harp? You waiting for Jordan to slow down from that career path for the Harper Stewart rest stop?

HARPER
Whateva, man. Y'all are buggin'. Deal the cards.

QUENTIN
I can't believe you never hit that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LANCE
Me neither.

HARPER
We were friends, we didn't bone and we're still friends. Call me crazy, but I think there's a correlation.

LANCE
Player, I saw how she was acting around you tonight.

HARPER
What? What did you see?

LANCE
She wanna get with you, Harp.

HARPER
(slight pause)
I'm in a very fulfilling relationship. Thank you very much.

MURCH
Two years now. Right, Harp?

HARPER
A happy and virtually drama-free two years, gentlemen.

LANCE
She does stand-up comedy, right?

MURCH
I thought she made jewelry.

QUENTIN
You said she was teacher.

HARPER
She's a caterer. Took her awhile to find her creative niche in life.

QUENTIN
Well, you know I can relate. But that don't sound like Jordan.

HARPER
She's not Jordan. She's Robin.

LANCE
Shit. I hope she ain't Jordan.

HARPER
Why you say that, L-Boogie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LANCE
'Cuz Jordan is too damn sassy and independent. And might make more cheese than you someday.

HARPER
Ohhh, so what, L?

LANCE
Hey, I love Jordan. But a woman like that don't need no man. Face it, dog. She's one step from lesbian.

The guys protest and laugh at that.

LANCE
(laughing)
I'm just saying that the only way a relationship works is if the man provides the loot and the woman takes care of shit at home.

HARPER
You're like a caveman from the stone-age.

MURCH
And it is so ironic. I mean guys are always on guard for the gold-diggers and yet they cannot take an educated sister who makes more money.

QUENTIN
We know you don't care, Murch. Your woman runs your ass regardless.

MURCH
Bite it. Okay, Spivey. Bite it.

LANCE
Man, shit. When we get married Mia's not going to be working no more. I'm bringing home the bacon. And her job will be being my wife and raising our kids.

HARPER
She's gonna be content with that?

QUENTIN
Man, is you kiddin'? Mia can't wait to have that nigga's babies. She old-school like a mug.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

LANCE
Thank the good Lord for that too. These chicken heads out here today won't let a man be a man. Mia let's me know I'm running shit.

MURCH
The consummate mother/whore, eh?

LANCE
Word is bond. Every man wants one.

HARPER
So what makes you think you want to get married now, Lance? You been fucking around on her for years. And with that new contract . . .

QUENTIN
Word, shorty. You gonna need a catcher's mit for all the pussy that'll be thrown your way.

LANCE
Man, I been had all the ass 10 men can have. My wild oats are sown. I mean how much ass can one man have?

ALL
A lot.

LANCE
Naw. It's just time, man. Marriage is sacred. My folks been together 35 years. That means something to me.

MURCH
I hear that.

Quentin grumbles.

LANCE
Besides, marriage is going to curb that appetite for more women. Marriage is the cure to promiscuity.

The fellas all laugh at that.

MURCH
Tell that to Frank Gifford.

QUENTIN
Tell it to my pops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

HARPER
For someone graduated summa cum laude you say some dumb shit, L.

LANCE
All I'm saying is there's a time for everything. We're in the real world now. Real world, real things.

Lance shoots a look to Quentin.

QUENTIN
I don't give a fuck what y'all say. Monogamy ain't natural. We ain't meant to be with just one person. If God had intended it to be that way he wouldn't have given us all that sperm.

MURCH
Aw man.

QUENTIN
And He wouldn't have bitches out number us so much . . .

ALL
(overlapping)
Whoa, whoa, Hey, hey hey cool the "bitch" stuff. They queens. Come on.

LANCE
You a philosophy major now?

HARPER
Why not? He's good at bullshit.

The fellas laugh at that, but Quentin takes offense at the comment and momentarily glares at Harper.

QUENTIN
Fuck y'all. Y'all know as well as I do that ain't nothing better than pussy. Except new pussy.

They all agree with that.

QUENTIN
Plus, I don't trust bitches anyway. They just as scandalous as niggas.

LANCE
(proudly)
Not all women, player.

Quentin looks over at Harper who returns a stern glare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

QUENTIN
What? You don't think Mia never got with no other dudes?

LANCE
I'm the first, last, and only.

QUENTIN
How do you know?

LANCE
'Cuz the pussy curve to my dick. Besides, I know my little angel.

Lance reaches for another beer and Quentin keeps staring at him.

QUENTIN
As much as you fucked around on her you don't think she's fucked around on you? Not once?

Harper wants to change the subject, but Quentin is pushing the envelope. Lance is getting hot and squeezing his unopened beer.

LANCE
No.

QUENTIN
If she did get her swerve on you know she'd be within her rights.

Lance is getting pissed.

QUENTIN
It's karma, baby.

The beer explodes in Lance's hands. He reaches across the table and grabs Quentin by the collar and violently yanks him to his face. Quentin is unfazed like he's been here before.

LANCE
I gotta take a piss.

He releases Quentin, walks into the bathroom, and slams the door. Harper looks at Quentin who relaxes and goes through his cards again. Harper is sober now.

INT. QUENTIN & LANCE CRIB -- NIGHT

(Later) Murch quickly loses the battle with sleep as Quentin makes a booty call. Harper searches around for the copy of Unfinished Business. He gets Quentin's attention.

QUENTIN
Hold on a second, baby. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
(almost whispering)
The book.

Quentin points unspecifically to the coffee table. Harper sees it, and tries to stash it in his jacket.

LANCE
Yo.

Harper looks up to see Lance smiling. Harper feigns a smile.

LANCE
(taking the book)
You best get your own copy, player.

HARPER
Oh, well y'know just feeling protective of my shit. Y'know?

LANCE
Too late for that, dog. I cain't wait to read this mug. I know this shit is tight.

HARPER
Well, uh go easy, big fella. You've always my toughest critic, Lance . .

LANCE
Blah, blah, blah, nigga.

HARPER
Alright.

LANCE
You're blessed. The Lord is smiling on you . . .

HARPER
Come on, Lance. Dead that.

LANCE
You still don't believe?

HARPER
I make it happen, L. Not some being beyond the clouds possessing me and shit.

Harper does a zombie walk. Lance chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANCE
You ig'nant, dog. How you think we're as fortunate as we are? We lucky, man. Anyone us could be poor, homeless, or like Quentin.

QUENTIN
I heard that shit. Fuck y'all.

HARPER
If He's in my life I ain't seen him.

LANCE
Yeah you have, player. And you will.

HARPER
Yeah, OK. Tuxedo fitting tomorrow?

LANCE
Yeah, but we gotta push it back to like 7. Mia's got a laundry list of shit for this brother here.

HARPER
Oh, that's cool. Jordan and I . . .

LANCE
Yeah, Jordan. Y'all gonna be smacking bellies this weekend.

HARPER
You never give it a rest do you?

LANCE
Bruh, please. You said you'd marry baby-girl in undergrad. Said y'all would be the power couple and shit.

HARPER
I said that?

LANCE
(nodding)
Kindred spirits. Soul mates. You meant that shit. Old feelings die hard. At least hit it, player.

HARPER
Hit it? Come on, L. What about all that talk about fidelity and being through with promiscuous behavior?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LANCE
I said me. That don't apply to you. Look, I know you got your girl and y'all relationship. But yo. Harp. My brother. My ace. My man. Jordan is fine. For once in you life, go 'head and be a dog, dog.

Harper stares at him a moment and then rubs his temple.

HARPER
I'm getting a headache. Let's go, Murch.

MURCH
(snapping awake)
Coming dear.

Murch jumps right up and out of the door. Quentin and Lance laugh. Harper can only muster a smile as he takes a look at the book in Lance's hand. He follows Murch out of the door.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

A frazzled Robin concocts another masterpiece as she talks with Harper on the phone. The scene is intercut between locations.

ROBIN
It's not the worst thing in the world. They were all going to read it anyway, right?

HARPER (O.S.)
Yeah, I guess . . .

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Harper, dressed only in stylish boxer shorts, lays out his clothes for the day.

HARPER
But I just don't like things out of my control like that.

ROBIN (O.S.)
I'm sure it'll be fine.
(beat)
Hey. I'm glad you called me . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
Yeah, you're probably right. It'll be fine. So, did you decide what you're wearing?

Jordan comes to the door, but pauses at the sight of Harper's half-naked body. She is at first embarrassed, and then takes a full gaze.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

ROBIN
Not yet.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

HARPER
What about that beige . . ?

ROBIN (O.S.)
I think I know how to dress for a wedding, Harper. It's under control.

HARPER
Come on. It's not like I'm . . .

Harper turns to discover Jordan standing there and he gets flustered, trying to find something to cover himself. Jordan smiles and acts relaxed.

HARPER
Uh . . wow. Look at the time.

ROBIN (O.S.)
You gotta go?

HARPER
Uh yeah, I'll talk to . . . what?

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

ROBIN
I said, I love you.

HARPER (O.S.)
Okay. I'll call you later. Bye.

Robin looks at the receiver contemplatively.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Jordan smiles bashfully as Harper hangs up the phone.

HARPER
Uh, morning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
Good morning.

HARPER
I'll, uh be ready in a minute.

JORDAN
Chop, chop. Time is money.

Harper grabs a towel and squeezes past Jordan who makes no conscious attempt to move out of touch this time.

JORDAN
Nice boxers. But I thought you were strictly a briefs man.

HARPER
Gift from Robin.

JORDAN
The girl's got taste.

Jordan smiles as Harper walks into the bathroom.

INT. CHEESECAKE FACTORY -- DAY

Harper and Jordan sit at a booth looking over the menus.

HARPER
Oh, come on. Don't you think it's time for a hetero-sexual Black man to be on the best-seller list? Black women writers have cornered the market for years. If I read one more novel where the Black man is unemployed, a dog, can't fuck ...

JORDAN
Ohh, here we go ...

HARPER
You know it's true. That's all they talk about ...

JORDAN
If they ain't talking about you what difference does it make?

HARPER
I just hope I'm given the same leeway.

JORDAN
Well, I can't give you no leeway. You are talking about me. And you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harper smiles and Jordan tries to fight one back.

HARPER
You ever think about that night?

Just then Jordan's phone rings and she picks it up immediately. Harper watches his friend thoughtfully and keeps smiles.

JORDAN
Anita? Hey. Um-hmm. We're having brunch now. Of course.
(laughing)
Okay. Bye.

The waiter comes over.

WAITER
You guys ready to order?

HARPER
Jordan, you go. I'll be ready soon.

Jordan looks at him as he scans the menu. She smiles.

JORDAN
We'll share the spinach quesadilla appetizer . . .

Harper looks up from his menu at her. He is intrigued.

JORDAN
And he'll have the linguine with grilled chicken and sun-dried tomatoes, side ceasar, and an iced tea with lemon. Unsweetened.

Harper closes up his menu and looks at her.

JORDAN
The ceasar with grilled shrimp for me . . .

HARPER
And a diet coke with lime?

JORDAN
Right.

WAITER
OK. Right away, guys. Thanks.

He walks away and Harper smiles at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN
Oh, please. You always order the same thing. You haven't changed.

HARPER
You know me that well, huh?

JORDAN
'Fraid so.

EXT. WASHINGTON MONUMENTS (THE MALL) -- DAY

Harper & Jordan walk amongst the tourists and the cherry blossoms.

HARPER
That Anita is a real go-getter, huh?

JORDAN
Anita is the shit, boy. She's got me under her wing, showing a sister how to thrive in this business.

HARPER
Uh-huh. She's very aggressive.

JORDAN
She just seizes her opportunities like any smart, professional person would do.

HARPER
Alright. Easy now.

JORDAN
They don't be giving Black women but so many shots. Shit.

HARPER
She got a man?

JORDAN
Why? What difference does that make?

HARPER
It's just a question.

JORDAN
(pause)
No. Her career is her "man".

HARPER
You got any kind of social life?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
(uncomfortable)
I mean not really. Personal and professional cross over so much that I don't even know where the line is anymore. But I'm fine with it. Sacrifice is the name of the game.

HARPER
You can't let work consume you.

JORDAN
What?! Please. That doesn't even sound like you.

HARPER
Maybe I'm maturing.

JORDAN
Maybe you're full of shit. I know how badly you want that lime-light. I see it. I recognize it in myself.

HARPER
Really?

JORDAN
Don't play coy. You recognize it too. You made that painfully obvious with your depiction of "Kendall".

HARPER
I call it like I see it.

JORDAN
Only where you're not concerned, Slackson Jackson. 'Cuz you are exactly the same.

HARPER
Peas in a pod, huh?

JORDAN
(nodding)
Ummm-hmmm. Your girl must be real patient or real dumb.

HARPER
Hey, Robin deals with it. She understands that I had dreams of my life way before I thought about her. But she's starting to get that itch.

JORDAN
Ooooh. The "m"-word, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
You better believe it.

JORDAN
And you have a problem with that?

HARPER
I mean, yeah. Marriage, moving in together, the last person you'll ever have sex with? That's wild.

JORDAN
Least you're getting some on the regular.

HARPER
Ohhh. No action, huh?

JORDAN
8 months and counting. Longer than that if we're talking good sex.

HARPER
All work and no play makes . . .

JORDAN
. . . Jordan a horny nut basket.

Harper laughs as Jordan takes a seat on a bench. Harper sits next to her.

JORDAN
I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I let myself go that night. If we both had.

HARPER
Yeah?

JORDAN
The way it is in your book is exactly how I pictured it.

HARPER
That close?

JORDAN
Damn near. You ever had that kind of sex for real?

HARPER
(pause)
Well. Not exactly. But close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JORDAN
For real? Where can a sister get some from?

HARPER
(laughing)
You could have had some once upon a time.

JORDAN
If I'da known how you'd turn out maybe I would have.
(pause)
Maybe I still can.

Jordan looks off into space. Harper isn't sure he heard her correctly.

HARPER
What did you say?

JORDAN
Nothing. Let's get back to this interview.

Jordan gets up and walks away and Harper follows her.

INT. PENTAGON CITY MALL -- DAY

Harper is on the phone. Across the mall Jordan browses half-heartedly in Victoria's Secrets. She fingers some sexy lingerie and signals to approaching sales reps that she's just looking. Harper watches her as he prepares to leave Robin a message.

ROBIN (V.O.)
Hey, this is Robin. Leave me a message.

HARPER
(after the beep)
Hey, boo. Just thinking about you. Hope you're enjoying your day ...
(pause)
I uh, lo-

Her machine beeps off. Jordan holds a sexy kimono up to her as she looks in a mirror. She bashfully shakes her head and hangs it back up. Harper hangs up the phone.

INT. BLOOMINGDALES -- DAY

Jordan stares at Harper as he and the saleswoman search the shelves and check the registry list of remaining gifts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
I'm going for the pasta bowls and serving utensils.

The saleswoman gathers up the order.

JORDAN
Good choice. You ever had Mia's shrimp scampi and angel hair?

HARPER
Shiiit, what? The bomb, baby. She used to cook at the drop of a hat. Good shit too. Remember?

JORDAN
Hell yeah. That girl can throw down.

HARPER
That she can.
(wistful pause)
That girl's got a lot of talent.

Jordan stares at Harper who spends one moment too long in a pensive state. By the time he looks at Jordan a light has already come on in her head. Her eyes widen.

JORDAN
Oh. My. God.

HARPER
What is wrong with you?

JORDAN
You scandalous motherfucker.

HARPER
OK. While you're tripping, I'll pay for this.

Harper walks toward the check out counter shaking his head. She follows in pleasurable astonishment.

JORDAN
It makes perfect sense. We just switched places.

HARPER
(to the salesman)
Could you wrap that please?

JORDAN
Mia's Kacey, you're Jackson and I'm . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
Buggin' the fuck out.

JORDAN
I'm Kendall. Jackson gives me earthquake sex . . .

HARPER
Earthquake sex . . ?

JORDAN
But you and I never had sex. And all Kacey and Jackson do is sleep in the same bed together like we used to do all the time.

HARPER
So what does that mean?

JORDAN
Oh. You're good. You are the shit!

HARPER
Jordan, I think the stress of the wedding is really getting to you.

Harper leans over and kisses her forehead. Jordan squeals.

JORDAN
That's it. The forehead kiss. Oh my God. It's a dead give-away. That's your signature. It's legendary.

HARPER
(pause)
What? What do you mean "forehead kiss"?

JORDAN
Oh, your forehead kiss is very endearing. Damn near erotic. Shit, you nearly got me with it. It's passionate. It's loving. It's . . .

HARPER
Bullshit. It's a book I wrote: a fictional account of some experiences I had, some people I knew. Something I've been wanting to do for a long time.

JORDAN
Right. To purge yourself. To right the wrongs. To live out fantastic missed opportunities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER
There she is ladies and gentlemen: Dr. Ruth Blackheimer.

JORDAN
Whoah. Wait a minute. Are you crazy?

HARPER
You're asking me that?

JORDAN
You dedicated the book to them. I mean, do you want to be found out? That's sick.

HARPER
You're right because what you're suggesting is totally ludicrous. Use your head.

JORDAN
Well, if Lance figures out what went down when he reads it, you better use your feet and run.

HARPER
First of all, you need a sedative. And secondly, Lance is grounded and has got a million important things to keep his mind from wandering on outlandish flights of fancy from reading Unfinished Business. As a matter of fact, he won't even finish it. At least not before the wedding. He won't have time.

INT. LANCE & QUENTIN'S CRIB -- DAY

Lance reads from the book and it's more than half finished.

LANCE
"White boys admired his prowess on the hardwood and his reputation with the ladies. They secretly deemed him 'The Ebony Humper'" This shit is hilarious, boy.

Harper stands dumbfounded at the door with Jordan.

JORDAN
See you later on at the church.

Harper is completely focused on Lance as Jordan exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
It's okay, L-baby.

LANCE
She won't even talk to me, man. It's been over a week.

HARPER
Lance, she's real upset, man . . .

LANCE
I can't lose her, man. I love her. I can't live without her . . .

HARPER
(overlapping)
Lance, Lance! You gotta tell her that, man. She's hurting. When she found out about the honeys at the Cotton Bowl . . .

LANCE
I know, I know. Fuck!!
(drops to his knees)
Lord forgive me and my wayward dick.
(grabs & looks at his penis)
What the fuck is wrong with you!!

Harper is on edge and feeling awkward.

LANCE
I'm a low mafucka man. Low!!

HARPER
I know what you mean.

LANCE
I gotta make this right, Harp. Can't lose her over this dumb shit. I love her, and I'm so sorry.

Lance breaks down again and Harper hugs him.

HARPER
Did you tell her that? That's all you really have to say. I'm sorry.

Lance bawls and Harper comforts him as best he can. Lance shoves the Bible into Harper's hands and starts praying. Harper rolls his eyes at this all-too familiar ritual.

LANCE
Isaiah 41:13, Harp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HARPER
You've been reading.

LANCE
Hell yeah.

HARPER
I uh didn't think you'd have time.

LANCE
Yeah, me neither. I had insomnia last night tho, duke. Woooo! I am on edge. Thought your book would knock me out. But I should have known better. Quentin was right. This is a page-turner like a mug.

HARPER
(nervous)
Ha, ha. Quentin said that, huh?

LANCE
It's a good thing you changed this dude to a hoop star 'cuz I'd have to disassociate myself from this shit. This mafucka banged many hoes. I'm flattered, but yo, was I that bad?

HARPER
Yes. You were.

LANCE
(grinning)
Yeah, you right. Cain't deny it. Ha ha.

Lance walks toward the kitchen with his face buried in the book.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

In a dimly lit room Harper paces the floor, talking to himself. A loud banging at the door startles him.

LANCE (O.S.)
Harp!! Harp!! Open up, man. Harp!!

Harper takes a breath before answering to find Lance drunk, crying, and with his Bible. He collapses into Harper's arms.

LANCE
Harp, man. Help me. Help me, Harp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
L, you know I don't . . .

Lance grabs Harper's right hand. He is very uncomfortable.

HARPER
(sighing)
Is that old or new testament?

LANCE
New.

HARPER
(finding it)
"I am holding you by your right hand -
I the Lord your God and I say to you -
Don't be afraid: I am here to help
you."

LANCE
Yes. Lord, yes, Jesus. Help me.

HARPER
Lance, my hand, kid . . .

LANCE
(crying)
Isaiah 1:18.

HARPER
"Come, let's talk this over! Says
the Lord. No matter how deep the
stain of your sins, I can take it
out & make you as clean as freshly
fallen snow . . .

LANCE
Take it away, Lord. Please.

HARPER
"I can make you as white as wool .."

The fellas ad-lib some more prayer together.

EXT. GEORGETOWN PARK -- DAY

Harper watches Lance finish signing autographs for a couple of giggling female groupies. Nearby Quentin and Murch get cash from the ATM. Lance catches Harper smiling as the groupies depart.

LANCE
I know what you're gonna say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
They practically threw the panties at you. Teddy Pendergrass style, L.

Quentin and Murch join them as they walk up the block.

LANCE
Well, you better take notes, player. You're gonna have to beat random honeys off with a stick soon.

QUENTIN
Who? Harp? Please.

LANCE
Shit yeah, player. After he does Oprah it's on. Honeys be approaching brothers in the limelight.

HARPER
Sounds enticing.

MURCH
Sounds like fun.

QUENTIN
Be like jail-break for you, Murch.

LANCE
Yup. Harper ain't never gonna have to work for no unsolicited, quality ass again. Panties will drop without coercion, cuddling, caressing, or hah ha ha ..

HARPER
What, L? What's so funny?

LANCE
. . . or kissing on the forehead to get 'em moist.

Harper hopes that he heard wrong. Quentin perks up.

HARPER & QUENTIN
What?

LANCE
You know when Harp kissed babes on the forehead, drawers dropped with the quicks.

MURCH
Is that true?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA
What? What we shared was as sweet and endearing as a forehead kiss. It was what I needed. What I wanted. He was a gentleman. A friend. I'll always love him for that.

Jordan is floored.

MIA
So, pearl or diamond earrings?

INT. TUXEDO RENTAL SHOP -- DAY

Murch and Quentin stand in front of the mirrors checking how their tuxedos fit. Quentin takes extra care with each piece of clothing. A frustrated Murch can't get his to fit correctly.

QUENTIN
Murch, my man, bohos like you weren't meant to wear fine Italian designer tuxedos. But a handsome, debonair player like me? I'm pimping this mafucka.

MURCH
You know I have got my own style . . never mind.

Murch walks away and Harper steps into the mirror.

HARPER
Mojo's on the prowl again, huh?

QUENTIN
. . . And you don't stop 'til the panties drop. Gots to represent up in there, shorty. You know how many single honeys be at weddings hoping to meet a handsome devil such as myself? It's gonna be a hoasis up in that piece.

HARPER
It's funny. If you put half the effort into your future as you do into impressing women . . .

QUENTIN
Nigga, I'm a pimp. So my future's mighty bright. Thank you very much.

Harper shakes his head and busies himself in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
(nervous laughter)
You know it didn't work that way. I never did it to get ass . . .

LANCE
Bullshit, nigga. You ain't slick.

QUENTIN
Yeah, nigga. You ain't slick.

LANCE
Honeys love that tender, sensitive, paternal stuff. Mia's the same way.

QUENTIN
Oh, Mia too, huh?

Harper glares at Quentin who implodes with laughter.

QUENTIN
Y'know, I tried that shit once. And it didn't work for me. Guess I ain't as authentic as ol' Harp.

Harper is in a panic. Quentin pats him on the back as they go into the tuxedo rental shop.

INT. LANCE & MIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Mia, in her virgin-white wedding dress, stands in front of a 3-way mirror as Jordan places her veil.

MIA
A forehead kiss?

Jordan nods. Mia smiles at the thought.

JORDAN
So?

MIA
So, what?

JORDAN
So what?! Mia?!

MIA
Jordan, good girls never tell.

JORDAN
Bitch, don't make me stick you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
Everything set for the bachelor party tonight?

QUENTIN
Hell yeah, shorty. Pops givin' me the key to the penthouse suite tonight. That shit is gonna be ig'nant. Off the hook. Luke dancers, youngin'. Luke dancers.

HARPER
Big Poppa still trying to groom you for hotel management?

QUENTIN
Only for the past 20 years. But I ain't tryin' to hear that shit. Dealing with payroll, unions, complaining guests . . .

HARPER
I guess it's too much like a job.

QUENTIN
Fuck you, nigga. You ain't my judge.

HARPER
Hey, I'm just trying to . . .

QUENTIN
Y'know, it's amazing how you be analyzing other mafuckas' shit and don't do the same for your own ass.

HARPER
Lower your voice, Q . . .

QUENTIN
You done dirt too, mafucka. And you'll do more.

Harper looks over his shoulder to see Lance looking at them.

QUENTIN
Yeah, that's right. You're gonna fuck Jordan this weekend. You ain't no better than the rest of us. Your shit just ain't caught up to you yet.

Harper can't say anything because Lance has approached.

LANCE
Everything cool over here . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

QUENTIN
(walking away)
Cooler than a fan, cat.

LANCE
Harp, what's up?

HARPER
Nothing, man. It's just, y'know, Q.

LANCE
Yeah, I know. You can't change that fool though.

HARPER
What you see is what you get.

LANCE
Yep. Least he's honest. More than you can say for most mafuckas.

Harper takes silent offense to that comment, but knows that truer words have never been spoken.

INT. LANCE'S LEXUS SUV -- NIGHT

The fellas ride in silence until Murch looks at his watch.

MURCH
Lance, may I use your phone?

LANCE
Sure, player . . .

Murch reaches for the phone and Quentin intervenes.

QUENTIN
Yo, hold up. Who you callin', Murch?

MURCH
Shelby.

QUENTIN
Uh-uh. No.

MURCH
Excuse me?

QUENTIN
I said no, man. You gotta stop letting her know your every move.

Murch tries to wrestle the phone from Quentin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURCH
Cut it out, Quentin. I am not playing.

QUENTIN
Yeah, but you gettin' played, dog.

HARPER
Leave him alone, Q.

QUENTIN
Naw, fuck that. It's time for him to be a man.

MURCH
You are such an a-hole.

QUENTIN
And she's a . . .

MURCH
Don't you dare!

QUENTIN
Come on, Murch. You know you don't like how that ho run you. None of us like it, dog.

Murch sits with his arms folded.

QUENTIN
Man, you gotta get firm with her. I mean, when she say "jump" you need to be like "off my nuts, Shelby".

Harper and Lance chuckle at that.

QUENTIN
Like with this bachelor party tonight. I don't want to see you all uptight and shit. Get loose tonight. And don't go home to her.

MURCH
You are talking crazy now.

QUENTIN
No, I'm not. Listen, just trust me.

Murch reluctantly lets go of the receiver.

INT. FIRST AME -- NIGHT

All the wedding party has just gone through the rehearsal process. Jordan talks with Lance, but he is clearly impatient.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
Lance, I'm not trying to exploit you. It'll be tastefully done . . .

LANCE
This is not a media event, Jordan. It's our wedding day.

JORDAN
It's only gonna be one camera . . .

LANCE
This is one day where I don't want no microphones or bright lights up in my face. Is that too much to ask?

JORDAN
Lance, I just . . .

LANCE
Some things are sacred. Like between a man and a woman? But I guess you don't know anything about that.

Jordan takes offense as Mia comes over to squelch the conflict.

MIA
Hey, hey. Easy you two . . .

LANCE
No. My mind is made up

Lance walks away as Jordan still feels the sting of his words.

MIA
I'm sorry, J. He's stressed . . .

Jordan nods and watches Mia go over to comfort her man. She wraps her arms around him and makes him smile. Jordan observes them. She shakes her head and breathes out.

JORDAN
(to herself)
What am I doing?

Harper comes up behind her and puts his firm hands on her shoulders. She nearly jumps at his touch.

HARPER
You alright?

JORDAN
Y-yeah. Yeah. No biggie.

Mia and Lance kiss. Harper smiles at that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
Are they disgusting or what?

She turns to Harper with something on her mind. She grabs his arm and walks him away.

JORDAN
Let me talk to you for a second.

Quentin watches them walk away and he nods his head knowingly. He spies Shelby playing watch dog, fussing over Murch.

SHELBY
Hmmph. Mia's got some nerve not putting me in this wedding.

MURCH
Well, you guys aren't really friends are you?

SHELBY
Are we a little snippy this evening?

MURCH
Sorry.

Quentin smacks his forehead in disbelief. He puts himself in Murch's line of vision.

SHELBY
Why didn't you call me to tell me how the tuxedo fit?

MURCH
Um Lance's phone was broken?

SHELBY
You guys are wearing the Armani's right?

Quentin signals him to do all sorts of contrary things. Murch tries his best to ignore him, but he has problems doing that.

MURCH
Yes.

SHELBY
(overlapping)
Because you cannot wear an American cut. It does nothing for your frame.

MURCH
(sigh)
Shelby . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SHELBY
While we're on the subject, are you taking that job with the firm?

MURCH
How is that on the subject?

SHELBY
Armani suits. Prestigious law firm. Need I say more?

Quentin signals for him to drive in a dagger.

MURCH
Uh, Shelby. I'm just not sure yet.

SHELBY
Well, honey you can not keep babysitting those ghetto children forever. You have to get a real job.

Quentin yells at Murch with his eyes to be more forceful.

MURCH
I do not want to talk about this. I am not going to talk about this now.

Hesitantly, Murch walks away and cracks a half-smile. Shelby is taken aback and goes after him. Quentin pumps his fist proudly.

INT. CHURCH ANTEROOM -- NIGHT

Harper paces back and forth as Jordan talks to him.

JORDAN
Calm down. You don't have to worry.

HARPER
Why did you have to say anything to her at all?

JORDAN
I was curious.

HARPER
Oh Jesus Christ.

Harper sits down with his head in his hands.

JORDAN
I've got something else to tell you.

HARPER
Something less dramatic please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
I want to make love to you tonight.

Harper slowly looks up at her in awe but is speechless.

JORDAN
I think our opportunity has come again. I don't want to let it pass by twice. I've been thinking about it and the truth is I don't want to end up like Anita with no balance in my life. Constantly climbing to get to the top. And for what? To be alone? Uh-uh. Look, I know this is a bit much. But I hope you'll say yes.

HARPER
Wow. I, Jordan. Wow. How- How do you expect me to react to this?

JORDAN
I don't know what to expect. I only know what I want. What I need. Let's have our night. And then we'll see.

HARPER
But, Jordan, Robin is coming . . .

Jordan leans over and kisses him. It's not deep and long but it's soft and passionate. Harper kisses back with conviction.

JORDAN
Don't answer now. Think about it.

Harper still feels the passion of her kiss as Jordan walks out of the room. Harper sits there and then looks heavenward.

HARPER
What are you doing to me?

Harper remembers that he's an atheist and snaps out of it.

HARPER
(walking out)
Myself. I was talking to <u>myself</u>.

INT. RESTAURANT (REHEARSAL DINNER) -- NIGHT

The families and friends all sit down to the rehearsal dinner. Mia and Lance ring their glasses to get everyone's attention.

MIA
Thank you all for coming to share this time with us. We are so over-joyed that so many of you came from

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIA (continued)
all over to be here this weekend.
(looking at Lance)
I am so in love with this man here.

Everyone claps and gushes with "Awwwws".

MIA
I wish I could take the sole credit for getting swept off of my feet, but I can't. Lance certainly played a part in that. And that new contract didn't hurt either.

Everyone laughs.

MIA
But seriously, none of this would have been possible without our friend, our counselor, our liaison, our best man, Harper Stewart.

Harper is a little embarrassed as everyone applauds him and pats his back. Lance looks at Mia and then at Harper. He is leery of their exchange. Mia blows Harper a kiss.

MIA
We love you, Harper.

Harper blows a collective kiss back.

MIA
Lance?

LANCE
(dazed)
Uh, yeah right. Yeah. I think Mia said it all. Yeah. Now y'all eat up 'cuz it's paid for.

Everyone laughs again and gets set to eat. Harper excuses himself and heads to the bathroom. Lance sees him and follows. He passes by Shelby and Murch as a waiter takes their order.

WAITER
Grilled prime rib or the baked sole?

Murch is set to answer and Shelby intercedes.

SHELBY
We'll have the sole.

MURCH
(beat)
I'll have the prime rib.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Shelby is shocked, but she composes herself.

SHELBY
Julian, the sole will be better for you . . .

MURCH
Shel, I don't want the sole.

Shelby gets self-conscious. The waiter doesn't know what to do.

SHELBY
Julian . . .

MURCH
I don't even like sole. I want red meat. If it clogs my colon so be it.

Shelby clams up wanting to respond. Murch smiles.

MURCH
Prime rib, please. Thank you.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Harper stands in the urinal when Lance comes in.

HARPER
ELL! S'up, baby?

Lance locks the door and turns to Harper with a deadly serious look on his face. Harper is concerned.

LANCE
Harp, I've been thinking. Listening to Mia just now and reading your book has really made me think. Do some soul searching. Y'know?

Harper flushes and goes to the sink.

HARPER
(nervous)
Oh oh, yeah?

LANCE
Yeah. I realized something. I owe you a lot, man. Mia's right. You kept us together.

HARPER
Come on, man. Ain't no need . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE
Naw. Naw. You could have easily dogged me out to Mia 'cuz I know how close you and your "little sister" are. I know that there were times that you thought I didn't deserve her. And you were probably right.

HARPER
Lance, who am I to judge . . ?

LANCE
You're everything, Harp. Thank you. I promise you I'm going to make her happy, and I'm going to be faithful.

HARPER
Well . . . good.

Harper is really uncomfortable with Lance staring at him. There is silence for a few beats. Harper washes his hands again.

HARPER
So this is it, huh?

LANCE
Yeah, man. Not a moment too soon.

HARPER
Lance, man. You always set the standard. And I've always admired that. I mean the football, the honeys, even your spirituality. And now you're getting fucking married! The ultimate step. How can you . . ?

LANCE
Harp, I have to. I'm strong in mind and body, but emotionally, I'm weak. I need Mia. She's the one who makes me whole. She's my earth. My queen.

HARPER
Man, I am so far from that.

LANCE
When the time is right you'll know.

HARPER
I'm not so sure, Lance. I mean Robin's great, but is she the woman I'm supposed to grow old with? I'm finally coming into my own and now I'm supposed to commit to her? Do I even really know how to commit?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANCE
You committed to that book.

HARPER
Yeah. But that was on my terms. I had sole control. And when I don't have it, I fuck up. And I don't wanna fuck up no more, man.

LANCE
We're human, Harp. We supposed to fuck up. Lord knows I know . . .

HARPER
No, you don't understand, L. I mean really fuck up . . .

LANCE
I understand, Harp. And I am not afraid. God has told me that this is right. I made Him a promise that if He gave me another chance with Mia. I'd do right by her. She's forgiven me for all my indiscretions, and that's amazing. So if she slept with someone else . . .

He takes a deep breath as tears well up in his eyes.

HARPER
(anxious)
What?

LANCE
I'd just have to deal with it. I wouldn't even question her about it.

HARPER
Just from faith in God?

Lance nods. Harper studies Lance's face for a long time and looks heavenward for a moment. He takes a deep breath.

HARPER
Lance, I gotta say something to you.

LANCE
What's up, dog?

Just then someone tries to open the bathroom door. Harper reconsiders. Lance opens the door and his UNCLE SKEETER enters.

LANCE
What's happening, Uncle Skeeter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

UNCLE SKEETER
Some fine gals in there, boy. Don't see why you wanna get married.

LANCE
Because I don't want 5 alimony payments like yo' ass.

UNCLE SKEETER
Ain't too old to whup you, boy.

LANCE
You and what platoon, big Skeet?

UNCLE SKEETER
Did I ever tell you 'bout W.W. II?

LANCE
Aww here we go . . .

HARPER
Yo, L, man. I'ma go eat.

LANCE
I don't blame ya, player. Get your grub on . . Oh yo, what'd you wanna tell me?

HARPER
Nothing. Just . . . congratulations.

They smile at one another and Harper walks out.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

(Continuous) As Harper comes out he runs smack dab into Jordan on her way to the ladies' room. Their bodies press against one another for a few beats and they smile at one another. Harper tries to side-step her and she accidentally side-steps with him. They nervously laugh and then look in each other's eyes. Then they brush away from one another in opposite directions simultaneously sighing relief.

INT. RESTAURANT REHEARSAL DINNER -- NIGHT

(Later) Mia and Lance present the wedding party with gifts: silk robes and boxers for the groomsmen and Coach change purses for the bridesmaids. Quentin models his robe for and flirts with Mia's cousins. He spies Shelby and Murch in debate and eavesdrops for a progress report. As expected: high drama.

SHELBY
You know I really don't appreciate you embarrassing me in front of everybody like that . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURCH
Shel, why do you always do this?

SHELBY
I'm doing something to you? I wasn't aware of that. I'm trying to help you. If I'm guilty of caring too much for you then sentence me now.

MURCH
God, you are so dramatic!

Quentin is shocked himself at those words coming from Murch.

QUENTIN
Everything cool, y'all?

MURCH
Peachy.

Murch walks away to greet other guests.

QUENTIN
Shelby?

SHELBY
Fuck off, Quentin.

She goes after Murch with a vengeance.

EXT. REHEARSAL DINNER -- NIGHT

Harper stands with Jordan in the doorway of the restaurant as family members hug the bride and the groom good-night.

JORDAN
(slightly buzzed)
So are you coming by after all that drinking and lap-dancing?

HARPER
I'm gonna call you later.

JORDAN
Well, don't have me waiting too long.

HARPER
No doubt.

JORDAN
This is our night, Harper. It's in the stars. I know you feel it too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA
(from her car)
Jordan! Girl, come on.

JORDAN
I hope you're wearing those boxers I like.

Jordan walks away toward the cars and Harper can't help but smile to himself. Quentin exits the building dangling the penthouse keys from his fingertips. Lance's frat brothers, teammates, and cousins woof and carry on. Quentin and Lance smile.

QUENTIN
Shorty, you got no idea what type of ig'nant shit we 'bout to set off tonight.

LANCE
Lead the way, dog.

Quentin leads the boisterous crowd to the parking lot. Meanwhile, Murch continues to get drama from Shelby.

SHELBY
Are you going to this juvenile bachelor party?

MURCH
Of course I am. And it is not juvenile.

SHELBY
Oh, come on. I'm sure your boyz from the 'hood would fit right in.

MURCH
You really need to stop talking about my kids.

SHELBY
Well, you need to stay with me tonight. There are some unresolved issues between us, and I think we should tackle them now rather than give them time to fester . . .

MURCH
I am not going to do that, Shelby.

SHELBY
Well, what am I supposed to do while you're out doing God knows what with some low-class hoochie-mothers?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murch just looks at him like a whipped dog. Quentin points out the phone.

QUENTIN
You whipped, man. It's pitiful.

Murch ignores him and heads straight for the phone.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper looks at the breathtaking view of the Washington DC skyline as Lance searches through his suitcase.

LANCE
In all the madness, I almost forgot.

In his rummaging, Lance tosses the preview copy of Unfinished Business on the bed. Harper zeroes in on the book. Lance pulls out a small jewelry box and a scrolled up piece of paper and shows them to Harper who is thoroughly distracted.

HARPER
(spacey)
What's that?

LANCE
My vows and the rings, dog. You still my best man ain't you?

HARPER
Yeah, of course.

LANCE
Best man got to carry the rings.

Lance opens up the box with matching wedding bands.

HARPER
Wow. Those are . . . they're beautiful, Lance.

LANCE
Thanks. 5K platinum. Gold is played.

Harper puts the rings and vows in his jacket. Then he sneaks a peek at the book on the bed. Lance grabs him around the neck.

LANCE
Come on. Let's get our drink on, fool . . .

They start to walk out but then Harper stops short.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURCH
Shel, that's really not my problem.

SHELBY
Ohhh. Not your problem?

Murch has hit a nerve and looks like he might wither.

SHELBY
Alright. Fine. Go. Go to your stupid-little-boys-only-bachelor-raunch-o-rama-shindig. I don't care. Go.

Shelby starts the quivering lip. Murch looks at her and looks over to the fellas who are loading up into the cars. He sighs.

MURCH
Alright. Fine.

Shelby begins to smile.

MURCH
See you in the morning.

Murch walks away and Shelby can't believe it. The fellas all cheer, woof, and chant, "Murch! Murch! Murch!" Murch doesn't smile. He gets in the car and looks back at Shelby who stands there with her arms folded and giving him the evil eye. Murch is clearly conflicted about his decision. He may have gone too far.

INT. PENTHOUSE (BACHELOR PARTY) -- NIGHT

The hoard of guys spill out into the plush penthouse room and it is laid out: big screen TV, VCR, video games, a pool table, dominoes and spades tables, fully stocked bar, porno mags, and lots of erotic treats from chocolate breasts to cakes shaped like naked women.

QUENTIN
Welcome to paradise gentlemen!

They all check out the surroundings in awesome wonder.

LANCE
Harp, I gotta give you something . .

Harper and Lance walk to another room.

MURCH
Quentin, where's the phone?

QUENTIN
(with contempt)
Murch . . .

(CONTINUED)

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Murch listens to Shelby's answering machine.

SHELBY (O.S.)
If this is anyone other than my selfish, thoughtless, spineless, excuse for a boyfriend, Julian Murchison please leave a detailed message, and I will be happy to get back to you. Thank you.

Quentin comes over to Murch with a tall mixed drink.

MURCH
Shelby, I know you're there. Please pick up the phone. Honey, I am so sorry that I didn't talk at . . .

Quentin snatches the receiver from Murch and hangs it up.

MURCH
Quentin, what are you doing?

Quentin stops him with his finger over Murch's mouth.

QUENTIN
Shhh. Drink.

Murch looks at him, clinks glasses and then he drinks.

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

The stag party is in full effect as evidenced by a montage of slamming dominoes, clinking glasses, shuffled cards, smoke rings, and major trash talking. Lance comes through the room to see everyone having a good time except for a twisted Murch having a conversation with himself about Shelby.

MURCH
Fuck that bitch! But I love her, man. But you love your people. Power to the people! We're the future of America. But what about the future of Black America? You can't abandon the kids. They need you. She needs me too. Who? You motherfucker. Shhh.

Murch looks up to see Lance and he smiles.

MURCH
Hey, Lance. I love you, man. Big motherfucker. Shhh.

Lance shakes his head and walks over to the dominoes table to get Quentin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE
Say, dog. Murch is trippin'. Keep an eye on him. And don't let him drink no more, aw-ite?

QUENTIN
Bet, shorty.

Lance walks over to the pool table as Quentin gets up to take care of Murch. Harper steps in front of him with a haughty grin and clearly feeling the effects of the alcohol. Quentin returns a wry look and then attends to Murch.

HARPER
Oh, it's like that, Mojo? You mad?

QUENTIN
Shorty, I'm busy right now. Gimme that drink, Murch . . .

Murch snatches it back and gets in Quentin's face.

MURCH
Why, Quentin? Why did you make me do it?

Quentin snatches the drink.

QUENTIN
Shut up, Murch. This is the best thing for you.

HARPER
And this is the best thing for Lance & Mia.

MURCH
But she hates me now . . .

HARPER
By the time he reads it they'll be happily married. He won't even think twice about those ambiguous words.

MURCH
Oh God. I think I'm gonna be sick.

Murch runs to the bathroom covering his mouth.

QUENTIN
Yo, if you feel good about it, case closed. End of story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
I'll be there in a second, L. Gotta drain the main vein. Knowhutumsain'?

LANCE
Bet. Hurry up.

Lance walks out and Harper turns to the bathroom. When Lance is out of sight Harper grabs the copy of Unfinished Business and holds it like it's gold. Just then Quentin passes by the door and sees exactly what Harper is doing. The two exchange a pointed stare as Harper stashes it in his jacket. Quentin glares at Harper before walking away. Harper breathes easy, exits the room and gets more confident with each step.

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Guys are all loud and boisterous except for Murch who sits on the couch talking into the receiver.

MURCH
Shelby, don't hang up again . . !

She does. Murch presses the redial button.

INT. PENTHOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Lance and Harper laugh with the rest of the party goers. Lance pours shot glasses of 180% proof grain alcohol for everyone.

LANCE
To that fat-ass contract and my phat ass bride to be. Hah hah.

The fellas all laugh and drink. Harper is already buzzed. They all wince and chase the shot with beer.

HARPER
Ahh!! Hit me off again, son!!

LANCE
Aww shit!! You 'bout to do your thang tonight ain't ya?

Harper smiles. Lance smiles back at him.

LANCE
You dirty dog! Oooh, you so nasty. But I ain't mad at 'cha. Ha ha.

Lance happily pours again and Harper drinks it down.

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
Why are you acting like I did something to you?

QUENTIN
You gave me your fuckin' skeletons when I didn't want 'em.

HARPER
Quentin, you were the only one I could trust at the time. I needed your help. Just like you've needed mine from time to time.

QUENTIN
Well we even now. Aw-ite? I'm taking that shit to the grave. And you can stop the job interviews and shit. I'd rather be unemployed for life than have to carry some more of your guilt for another 5 years.

Quentin heads back for the dominoes table. Harper isn't fazed and grabs Quentin by the arm. They stare each other down.

HARPER
You know you haven't changed a bit. You're still the same spoiled, rich brat you were in prep-school. Lashing out at the world for your fuck-ups and shortcomings. And jealous of your friends' success. You need to grow the fuck up.

Quentin knocks Harper's hand away but still looks at him.

QUENTIN
You know for a hypocritical cowardly bastard you talk a lot of shit, Harp. I may have had my share of fuck-ups. But I paid for all of 'em. You just been lucky. That's all.

HARPER
(beat)
Well then. I guess I got what you'd call "good karma". Don't I?

Quentin has no answer for him.

HARPER
Whateva, man.

A knock comes to the door. Wayne looks through the peep hole. His eyes and smile widen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WAYNE
Oh, it's on! It's on and poppin'!

He opens the door and in come 3 voluptuous strippers and their bodyguard, FANDANGO. It is on, indeed. Miami bass music pumps loud and the party goers stop what they are doing to find a good seat. They bark, whoop, and holler for the strippers, two of which enter the living room immediately.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Fandango escorts the third stripper (CANDY) to the back room. As they come down the hall Murch stumbles out of the bathroom and bumps into them.

MURCH
Oh, excuse me.

FANDANGO
Better get on in there, homey. 'Bout to get freakedafied up in this bieeeyatch!

Murch stares at Candy somewhat mesmerized. Fandango whisks her away and Murch walks into the room in a daze.

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Lance's frat brothers and teammates drag him into the room and sit him in the center of the room. The strippers converge.

STRIPPER #1
Is this the unlucky man?

STRIPPER #2
The one they call L-Boogie?

The fellas are titillated and scream out, "That's him. Word up. Get him girl." Lance nods his head and smiles. A bass version of Boogie-Ooogie-Ooogie plays and the strippers get buck-wild!

BOTH STRIPPERS
Well, boogie down, baby.

STRIPPER #1
I'm gonna boogie-oogie-oogie 'til I just can't boogie no more.

STRIPPER #2
Boo-gie, Boo-gie some more.

The music pumps loud, fast and fierce and the strippers gyrate, jiggle, and fondle all over Lance. Fellas jump out of their seats and crane their necks to see what's happening. Lance takes the strippers by their arms, and walks them over to Harper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE
Get yourself a taste, fool. 'Cuz this is my life!!

Harper welcomes the double team, and he returns their grinding and jiggling. Fellas throw down money chanting "Go, go, go, go".

LANCE
That's my homeboy there!! Set it off tonight, dog!! Get in that ass!!

The strippers strip an inebriated Harper of his jacket and toss it away. The copy of Unfinished Business falls onto the floor at Lance's feet. Lance sees it and picks it up. He looks at Harper with suspicion. Harper is too busy grinding to notice. Lance conceals the book and then focuses back to the main attraction. Murch sits dazed, drunk, and depressed. Quentin begins rolling a marijuana blunt.

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Fandango gets Candy.

FANDANGO
Girl, you gots to handle your bidness tonight. These some paid, high-falutin' niggas up in here.

She nods her head as he walks toward the living room.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The fellas whoop and clap for the strippers as they collect their money off of the ground. Fandango enters the room with all the style of a low-class pimp.

FANDANGO
Y'all like that, huh?

Fellas cheer in affirmation.

FANDANGO
We got mo' fo' yo'. Right now Fandango -that's me- and Sweet Cheeks 'bout to bring you something luscious and shug-ray. Allow me to introduce the flava we call, Caan Daay! Give it up niggas! Give it up!

CANDY emerges as the song "Candy" by Cameo is heard. She shakes her groove thing for all the guys who steadily throw dollars at her feet. Murch wakes up and he is riveted. She approaches him seductively and jumps on his lap butt first and grinds.

CONTINUED:

CANDY
Oooh, daddy. Pump me. Pump Candy.

The fellas go bananas. Murch tries to grind, but instead he stops and buries his face in her back. She smells like heaven.

MURCH
Do you love me?

CANDY
Oooh, what, daddy. What'd you say?

MURCH
Do you love me?

CANDY
Oooh, yes, daddy. Candy loves you.

Murch is is heaven and hugs her around her waist. The fellas all get a big guffaw out of that.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

(Later) The party has wound down. Some guys leave, others stand around talking, and some are passed out cold. Lance stands at the doorway of his room laughing with Wayne.

WAYNE
Grabbed old-girl like a 5 year-old grabs his momma.

LANCE
He overdid it tonight, dog. Please order him some coffee and make him drink it.

WAYNE
You got it, boss.

LANCE
I gotta take care of some business.

WAYNE
I better pass out the gas-masks.

LANCE
Prime rib gotta hold of a brother.

Wayne walks away and Lance walks into his bedroom feigning laughter. When he sees that Wayne is gone he pulls out Unfinished Business, heads for the bathroom, and shuts the door.

INT. FOYER -- NIGHT

Murch, trying to appear sober, waits for CANDY to emerge. The other two dancers come out from the back room talking loud and counting their money. Candy is more reserved. Fandango approaches her.

CANDY
Oh no. Fandango, no.

FANDANGO
Come on now, Candy. Do me this solid. Alicia's sick. There's one in Rosslyn and a white one up in Silver Spring.

CANDY
I can't tonight. I . . .

He looks at her with sympathetic mack-daddy eyes.

FANDANGO
I wouldn't ask if I wasn't in a quan-da-ry. Come on. There's an extra $150 in it for you. Wit' tips you could clear $500 easy tonight. I know you could use that.

CANDY
(kissing her teeth)
Alright.

He hands her the address.

FANDANGO
'Bout an hour. Bebe and Lucinda fiddna go get some IHOP. Don't fill up too much now. You still gotta shake them thangs, baby. Shake them thangs, baby. Ha ha ha.

Fandango walks out of the door laughing. Candy takes a breath and Murch seizes the opportunity.

MURCH
Excuse me. Candy?

CANDY
Yeah?

MURCH
I . . . I really enjoyed your show. You were excellent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDY
(walking out)
Yeah. Thanks.

MURCH
Listen, are you leaving now?

CANDY
I got 2 more parties tonight.

MURCH
C-can I call you sometime?

CANDY
Sorry, baby. Company policy forbids me to give out my number, but here's my card for Sweet Cheeks. If you're in need of a stripper call and ask for Candy, alright? I gotta go.

She is out of the door and Murch is right on her tail. Meanwhile Harper talks on the phone with Jordan.

JORDAN (O.S.)
So what's up?

HARPER
(tipsy)
You mean besides this love shank between my legs?

JORDAN (O.S.)
Boy, do not tease me.

Harper laughs.

JORDAN (O.S.)
So, I guess you're coming tonight?

HARPER
Oh yeah. You're coming too.

JORDAN (O.S.)
Oh, promise me.

HARPER
You got it.

JORDAN (O.S.)
See you in a bit.

Harper hangs up, contemplating his decision. He smiles and nods.

EXT. THE SPIVEY GRAND -- NIGHT

Candy's co-workers sit in their car waiting impatiently. Murch talks with her, but is steadily losing her attention.

STRIPPER #1
Come on, Candy-girl. You comin'?

STRIPPER #2
We tryin' to get our grub on.

CANDY
I'm coming you guys. Hold on.

STRIPPER #1
(to Stripper #2)
Sidditty-ass college girl.

STRIPPER #2
For real tho'.

MURCH
So d-do you like work . . ?

CANDY
Look, you seem like a really nice brother, but I really have to go. They're waiting.

MURCH
I don't mean to bother you. I really don't. I - I just thought we had a connection back there was all.

CANDY
Kind of goes with the job. Y'know? Provide the fantasy. That's the business. But I keep my personal life very separate.

MURCH
Right. You'd have to. Please forgive me. You did a great show.

CANDY
Thanks.

She begins to walk away.

MURCH
B - because if you didn't define yourself for yourself you'd be crunched into other people's fantasies of you and you'd be eaten alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Candy stops in her tracks and turns around to Murch with a strange look.

CANDY
What?

MURCH
Sorry. It's just a little quote I use to inspire my students . . .

CANDY
Audre Lorde. I know.

Murch is speechless. He pinches himself.

MURCH
Yeah.

Candy smiles slightly.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Quentin lights the rolled blunt. Harper, in the midst of his good-byes doesn't see Lance anywhere.

HARPER
(to Wayne)
Yo, where's Lance?

WAYNE
That brother's dumping some bio-hazardous waste up in there.

HARPER
Word? Wanted to say good night before I broke out. Wish him luck and all.

WAYNE
You can try, Harp. But when he get on there this time of night he means business.

HARPER
I'm well aware, my man.

Harper smiles and quickens his step. D'Angelo's "Shit, Damn, Motherfucker" oozes out of the stereo system.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Lance reads and flips through the pages looking for something to catch his eye. He finds something and begins to read carefully. His eyes narrow and his face contorts. He brings the book closer to his face and shifts his sitting position to full attention.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We hear Harper narrating.

HARPER (V.O.)
Kacey had cried a river on Jackson's shoulder that week. Not only were the rumored exploits of the "Ebony Humper" becoming too commonplace to for her to handle, but she'd also had her fill of the false paternity suits and the groupies' crank phone calls. Sure, Brian meant the world to her, but she wasn't going play the fool any longer. She wanted revenge.

Lance's eyes narrow.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

Harper sits at his desk studying. He looks up to see Mia dressed in his robe staring at him lovingly. She lets the robe drop and she is butt-naked.

HARPER (V.O.)
The sweetest payback for his random indiscretions would be a personal one of her own. But how could Jackson be a part of that? What did he have to gain from that other than the guilt of betraying the trust of the brotherhood that he shared with Brian? But he was responsible for bringing them together and thus accountable for her misery.

Mia walks over to Harper who stands up protesting only slightly. She puts his fingers in her mouth, sucking them sensuously and thus quieting his protestations.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Back in the present Quentin passes the blunt after taking a hit. Harper interrupts the cipher and takes a long, arrogant toke himself. Quentin looks at him with disdain.

HARPER
Y'all brothers have good evening. Catch you in the a.m. Peace.

Quentin glares at Harper as he snatches up his jacket, slings it over his shoulder, and walks to the bedroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Meanwhile, Lance continues reading and starts to burn up.

HARPER (V.O.)
Yet and still he had to take the moral high-road. They both had to. They ignored the desire and the hormones that screamed in their loins . . .

INT. HARPER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper and Mia climax together, moaning in ecstasy.

HARPER (V.O.)
And Jackson found his most unflattering set of pajamas for her and tucked her in. She too had come to her senses, but she did have one last request.

MIA
Can we do it from the back?

HARPER (V.O.)
She asked to be held. And he had to oblige her. She was his friend. He was her protector. So they cuddled, and though this boundary probably shouldn't have been crossed their bond was made stronger that night. He was there for her, and she was comforted.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper talks to Lance through the bathroom door. He searches his jacket for the book. He can't find it. But he isn't panicked. Yet.

HARPER
Yo, ELL! I'm 'bout to break. Yo, son. I'm gonna blow her back out tonight. She don't even know . . .

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Lance can only hear Harper's narration and he is enraged.

HARPER (V.O.)
As she slept in his arms, beautiful and angelic, Jackson sealed the innocent evening with a kiss to her frontal lobe.

He slams the book shut.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper looks around him on the floor, but still can't find the book. A primal scream is heard coming from the bathroom. Everyone turns to it as Lance nearly breaks the hinges off of the bathroom door. With rage in his eyes and the book gripped in his hand, he sees Harper. Harper is now in a panic.

LANCE
You!! You fucked Mia!!

Lance throws down the book and charges Harper full-throttle swinging his fists wildly. Harper tries to fight him off, but it is nearly impossible because Lance is bigger, stronger, and faster. Fellas try to jump in but they are thrown off.

LANCE
You dirty back-stabbing bastard!! You mafuckin' sonofabitch!! I'm gonna kill you!!

HARPER
Lance, you, you don't know what you're saying!

LANCE
Oh, yes, I do!! "Kissed on the frontal lobe". I know what that shit means!! You supposed to be my boy!!

Quentin stands toking his blunt and watching Harper get his ass kicked. Lance picks him up by the collar and slams him against a wall. Harper struggles against him.

HARPER
L!! You're making a mistake. You been drinking. I wouldn't do that!

Lance throws Harper across the room like a rag doll. Fellas try to restrain him, but they have no luck. He grabs Harper again and they struggle to the balcony. Lance leans Harper over the balcony railing. Quentin comes over to get a closer look.

EXT. THE SPIVEY GRAND -- NIGHT

The other strippers wait impatiently as Murch and Candy stand smiling and talking.

CANDY
Thank goodness I'm in my final semester because it's been hard to pay that tuition. So . . .

MURCH
You're shaking what your mama gave you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Candy laughs. The other strippers roll their eyes. One of them leans out the window and notices something: 8 stories up Lance leans Harper over the balcony railing.

STRIPPER #1
Damn. Look y'all!!

CANDY
(not noticing)
I'm coming you guys.

STRIPPER #1
No, look up there!

STRIPPER #2
Them fools trippin'.

Murch looks up to see what's going on.

MURCH
Omigod!

He rushes toward the building then stops, and turns back around.

MURCH
Don't leave. I'll get you home. I'll pay for your time. Just don't go okay? Please.

She stands anxiously, but doesn't make a move. Murch runs inside.

CANDY
Be careful.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

The party guests hold onto Lance's arms trying to get him to pull Harper up from his compromising position.

LANCE
Y'all back the fuck up. I'll drop his ass!

They do so. Harper is scared shitless. He looks over at Quentin who's just standing there. Harper pleads with him to help.

HARPER
Don't do this, man. Chill. We boys. You're reading too much into it, L.

LANCE
I know how to read between the lines. I ain't fuckin' stupid!! No wonder you hid that shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
Don't drop me, Lance. God, please. Oh God.

LANCE
Oh, you want God now? Ain't that a bitch?

Harper's is petrified. Quentin gets in Lance's ear.

QUENTIN
L-baby, You ain't gonna do this.

LANCE
Yes, I am.

QUENTIN
You're gonna risk your future for this mafucka?

LANCE
Latrell Sprewell came back. It might be worth it.

QUENTIN
Come on, L. You're gonna marry a beautiful woman tomorrow. She loves you and only you, shorty.

HARPER
Listen to him, Lance.

LANCE
Shut the fuck up! I'm listening, Q.

QUENTIN
Look, I know Harper's a bitch-ass. But he's your man 100-grand. He ain't do that to you. Karma don't come back that strong, shorty.

HARPER
You know he's right, Lance. Q's honest. You said it yourself. He wouldn't lie.

QUENTIN
Even about you being a bitch-ass?

HARPER
Yes, yes! Especially that.

QUENTIN
See, L? God don't want this. Pull him up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lance is conflicted, but he comes to his senses and pulls Harper back onto the balcony. In a daze he walks back into the room. All eyes are on him. He grabs the book, stares at it and nearly cries. He recomposes himself and stares blankly at everyone.

LANCE
The mafuckin' wedding is off.

No one is sure how to react and all stand flabbergasted and frozen by the announcement. Lance stares directly at Harper.

LANCE
Get the fuck out.

Everyone save Harper and Quentin scramble to get their jackets and make their way out of the joint with the quicks. Harper doesn't move, but tries to speak.

HARPER
(breathless)
L, wait. Don't . . .

Lance hurls the book at Harper.

LANCE
You . . . you go to hell.

Lance walks back into the bathroom like a zombie and slams the door. Harper makes eye-contact with Quentin standing in the doorway. He walks into the other room toking on his blunt. Murch comes in looking around at the evidence of the melee.

MURCH
Whoah. Harper what happened?

Harper picks up his book, gets up, and pulls himself together as best he can before he walks out alone. Murch stands confused.

MURCH
Damn! I'm always out of the loop.

INT. JORDAN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Handkerchiefs drape over lamps. A bump-n-grind R&B song permeates the atmosphere. Jordan, dressed in that sexy kimono throws videotapes and spreadsheets off of her bed. She pulls some hors d'oeuvres from the microwave and gives the room a spray of air-freshener. To her, the mood is absolutely perfect. The doorbell rings. Jordan takes a breath and checks her reflection before answering the door. Harper is there looking very disheveled.

JORDAN
Oh my God, Harper. What . . ?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He comes in and starts kissing and caressing Jordan. She laughs.

JORDAN
Wait a minute, baby. We got time.

Harper starts pulling off her robe and fondling and kissing on her breasts. She gets uncomfortable and begins to resist him.

JORDAN
Harper. Wait . . . stop. Harper!

HARPER
What?! Isn't this the exclusive you wanted?

They stand apart from one another staring until Harper walks over to the couch and sits.

HARPER
What the fuck am I doing?

He buries his head in his hands. Jordan stands with her hands on her hips waiting for an explanation.

HARPER
Lance called off the wedding.

JORDAN
What? Was he serious?

HARPER
I hope not. He was drunk. Maybe not..

JORDAN
Oh my God. Are you alright?

HARPER
Yeah. But thanks to you I can trade my appearance on Oprah for an average Jerry Springer show.

JORDAN
Thanks to me?

HARPER
Thanks to your stepping-on-whoever-it-takes-to-get-to-the-top attitude.

JORDAN
This is supposed to be my fault?

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER
Yeah. They'd be in total marital bliss by the time the book was supposed to come out, but I got my ass kicked instead. Thanks.

Jordan tries to formulate her thoughts.

HARPER
And what is the fuck is that smell?

Jordan hauls off and smacks Harper.

JORDAN
How dare you!! You got a lot of motherfucking nerve blaming me for your skeletons, mister!

HARPER
Jordan . . .

JORDAN
I'm not through, Harper Stewart. This is royally fucked up! For weeks you got me all fired up: Thinking that my life is empty and that we could have been great together. And then you come in here with wino's breath and a stiff dick trying to hump me like some street whore?

HARPER
Look, I didn't mean to disrespect you. I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking. But let's not get emotional. Be practical, J. Come on. Me and you. Peas in a pod.

JORDAN
Motherfucker, I've been drinking tequila and inhaling ginsana. My hormones are raging out of control. So I don't wanna hear about no goddamned peas. I'm horny!!

Harper stands confounded for a beat. Then he tries to kiss Jordan's forehead. She pushes him away in disgust.

JORDAN
Fuck you and good night!!

She storms to the bedroom and slams the door.

HARPER
Can't we just hold each other?

FADE OUT:

INT. NATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

Harper, shabbily dressed his tuxedo tries to keep up a good appearance as he waits for Robin. She emerges from the gate dressed in her usual imperfect-but-cute style. Harper forms a weak smile behind his sunglasses. He kisses her cheek.

HARPER
H-Hi.

ROBIN
Morning. You look so handsome.

HARPER
(barely audible)
Thanks.

ROBIN
Don't worry I'm not wearing this. I just didn't want to get my dress wrinkled on the plane. Think I can change at the church?

HARPER
I- I don't . . Sure. I don't know ..

ROBIN
Hey. You alright?

Harper nods weakly.

ROBIN
Well, come on let's get going . . .

Robin begins walking away, but Harper's legs won't support him. He needs the wall for support and then slumps down in a chair. Robin stops walking and talking when she notices Harper isn't with her. She heads back toward him.

ROBIN
Come on, honey. Harper . . ?

With a trembling hand Harper reaches out, grabs her arm tightly and pulls her close to him.

ROBIN
I knew it. Hangover city. Come on, baby. Let's get you some coffee . .

As if he doesn't hear her he holds her close wrapping his arms around her waist. Robin is self-conscious now.

ROBIN
Harper, what's wrong with you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harper looks up at her. She takes off his sunglasses to see his bruises. She is taken aback, but maintains her composure.

ROBIN
Okay. It's alright. Just get up. Come on. Tell me what happened.

He continues to hold her tightly and she strokes his head.

INT. AU BON PAIN -- DAY

Harper has just given Robin a review of the past 36 hours and she takes it all in. Harper waits for her response with caution.

ROBIN
Did you sleep with her?

HARPER
No.

ROBIN
But you were going to. You wanted to.

Silence is Harper's answer. Robin shakes her head and breathes out. After a musing pause:

ROBIN
I am very disappointed in you, Harper. I know you feel like shit now, but I'm not going to lie to you. You compromised yourself, our relationship, and Lance and Mia's.

HARPER
(nodding with guilt)
I know.

ROBIN
But I'm glad you told me. At least I know where I stand with you now.

HARPER
Robin, that's not true. I . . .

ROBIN
Don't. Please. It's okay. I may not be perfect, but I'm strong. At least I know I'm not crazy.

Harper is at a loss for words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN
But let's not worry about that right now. You have to try to make this right. The wedding starts soon.

HARPER
I know, but what am I gonna do? I've been looking all over for Lance this morning. I can't find him anywhere. Even if I do how am I gonna convince him to get married now?

ROBIN
That doesn't sound like you Harper. You have one of the most creative minds I've ever known. Don't worry you'll think of something.

HARPER
But how, Robin?

ROBIN
I dunno. Divine intervention?

Harper isn't convinced and is defeated.

ROBIN
It'll be OK. I'll go with you.

Harper is very pleased to hear that news.

ROBIN
I think I owe it to myself to see what's been holding you back from me all this time.

HARPER
Thank you, Robin.

He attempts to hold her hand and kiss her, but is rebuffed.

ROBIN
You're welcome. Come on.

She gets up and walks away. Harper is grateful, but disappointed. He follows her.

EXT. FIRST AME -- DAY

Shelby stands at the doors of the church alone in a very expensive designer dress and a pleasant expression on her face. The groomsmen's limo pulls up. Quentin, Murch, Wayne and the other groomsmen head up the stairs. Murch sees Shelby standing there and he walks over to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURCH
Shelby, I have something . . .

SHELBY
Julian, please. Let me speak. Before you say anything I want you to know that I forgive you.

MURCH
You do?

SHELBY
Yes, I know now that you were just succumbing to that testosterone peer pressure.

MURCH
Shelby . . .

SHELBY
I know you wanted to be with me last night. And it ate you up that you couldn't.

Murch tries to get a word in edgewise but is unsuccessful.

SHELBY
The more I thought about it, the more it made sense that you should continue to suffer and think about the jeopardy that you put our relationship through rather than let you have your way.

MURCH
Shel, I have to tell you . . .

SHELBY
Shhhh. Whatever it is I'm sure it can wait until the reception. You better get inside . . .

Shelby is distracted by one of the guests cautiously coming toward them. It's Candy, the stripper, dressed conservatively, but still a knockout. Murch beams when he sees her.

MURCH
Candace! I'm glad you could make it. You look great.

CANDY
(referring to her dress)
Is it okay? I didn't really . . .

CONTINUED: (2)

MURCH
It's great. It's more than great.

CANDY
You think so?

MURCH
Yes. Definitely.

Shelby (pissed off) clears her throat to get their attention.

MURCH
Oh, I'm sorry. Candace, this is Shelby. Shelby, Candace.

CANDY
How're you doing? Nice to meet you.

SHELBY
Hah, I'm so sure.

CANDY
So, should I sit anywhere?

MURCH
Sure, I'll see you at the reception.

CANDY
(smiling sweetly)
Okay. Thanks, Julian.

She goes inside and Murch watches her. Shelby is livid.

SHELBY
Who was that . . that . . pop tart?

MURCH
Shelby, it's over. I am not the man for you and you are not the woman for me. Let's just stop fooling one another. I hope you find what you're looking for because that's what I plan to do. I have to go. Bye, Shel.

Murch runs inside while Shelby stands mouth wide open. In the background Harper and Robin pull up in a cab and come up the steps. Quentin smirks at Shelby and points to the ground.

QUENTIN
You better pick that up.

SHELBY
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

QUENTIN
Your bottom jaw.

HARPER
Q!! Morning, Shelby. You look . . .

SHELBY
Go to hell!!

Shelby storms inside.

HARPER
Meet you there. We'll do lunch.

QUENTIN
What's up? Where's Lance?

HARPER
I don't know.

QUENTIN
What?!

HARPER
Robin, Quentin. Quentin, Robin.

ROBIN
My pleasure. I'll get changed.

Harper watches Robin as she heads inside. Murch emerges.

MURCH
Hey, Harper. Is that Robin . . ?

QUENTIN
He can't find Lance.

MURCH
Oh, not good. Not good. What are we going to do?

HARPER
(frantic)
I don't know. I don't know . . .

QUENTIN
Well, you better figure something out . . .

The fellas bicker as Lance, dressed in the previous night's clothes, gets out of a cab, and storms up the stairs.

HARPER
(noticing)
Lance!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Lance keeps walking and says nothing. They step in front of him.

MURCH
Good morning, Lance.

QUENTIN
Nervous, L-Boogie?

HARPER
Lance, you gotta get dressed.

LANCE
I told you mafuckas this wedding is off. I just have to tell my parents face to face. Then I'm out.

Lance continues walking and Quentin grabs him by the arm.

QUENTIN
(like last night)
Come on, L-baby. You ain't gonna ...

LANCE
Man, shut the fuck up. That bullshit ain't working today. Get out my way.

Lance shrugs him off as he walks into the church. They all stand dumbfounded for a moment and then go after him.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

In an archway adjacent to the church Jordan hands the flower girls their baskets of petals. She notices Lance storming in.

LANCE
Mama!! Daddy!!

MR. & MRS. SULLIVAN, sitting at the front of the church turn to their son. Lance heads toward them with determination. The fellas have to make a move. Jordan shoos the girls to the back.

LANCE
I've got to tell you something!!

All the fellas jump on top of Lance trying to drag him in the other direction, but Lance drags them along, albeit slowly.

MURCH
Lance, no.

QUENTIN
Dog, wait.

HARPER
Wayne, help us, man!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wayne comes over to help hold Lance back but he keeps coming. The gathered wedding guests don't know what to think. Mrs. Sullivan looks worried. Mr. Sullivan just laughs. Lance keeps walking and he's more than halfway down the aisle. Harper has to think of something quickly before it's too late.

HARPER
Lance!! You gotta pray, man.

Lance stops in his tracks, shrugs everyone off and they slump to the floor. He turns to Harper. Jordan's heart is in her throat.

LANCE
What did you say?

HARPER
Pray, man.

LANCE
You want me to kick yo' butt again?

HARPER
(desperate)
Come on, L. You haven't really done it today. Ask your God. Ask our God, man.
(getting on his knees)
Let's pray together, Lance. Pray with me, brother.

Lance looks at Harper as if he were an alien. The crew waits with baited breath for a response to Harper's desperate plan.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM -- DAY

Robin dressed in a very classy dress stands in the mirror pinning her hair. She looks at herself critically. Tears well up in her eyes, but a deep breath and exhale fights them back.

ROBIN
It'll be fine, Rob. Hold it down.

She packs up her stuff without finishing her make-up.

INT. CHURCH ANTEROOM -- DAY

Robin exits the bathroom to see Murch, Quentin and Jordan down the hall crouched and peeking into the pastor's office. They whisper amongst themselves.

MURCH
Do you think this will work?

QUENTIN
God only knows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
Shut up, Quentin.

Frantic voices behind a nearby closed door distracts Robin. She takes a listen.

BRIDESMAID (O.S.)
Mia, calm down. It'll be fine.

Robin thinks a moment, takes a breath, and goes inside the room.

INT. BRIDE'S MAID'S ROOM -- DAY

(Continuous) Robin peeks in to see Mia is a bundle of nerves.

MIA
Did I order enough food? Did I choose the right flower arrangement? Oh my Jesus, I should have worn the pearl earrings shouldn't I?

The bridesmaids all "yes" her to death and try to get her to relax, but she's still frantic. She immediately freezes when she looks at Robin with glassy eyes. Robin gets self-conscious.

MIA
Hello?

ROBIN
Oh, um I. Hi, Mia. I'm Robin. Harper's . . girlfriend.

MIA
Oh my Jesus. Robin, yes . . .

Mia hugs her warmly as if she were a long lost friend. Robin can't help but smile.

MIA
How are you, my sister?

ROBIN
I'm fine. But are you alright? Because you really look beautiful.

MIA
Oh thank you. Yes, I'm fine. I'm just . . I've got jitters! I know I'm driving my girls crazy. I've been fine for weeks, but my wedding day is finally here! I just want everything to go right. I know it sounds silly, but if this day isn't perfect . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just then Jordan comes in the room in a panic.

JORDAN
Mia, I'm sorry. Honey, you better sit down. I have some bad news to tell you . . .

MIA
Jordan, what is it?

Jordan! Robin's eyes light up. The icon!

JORDAN
(babbling)
Maybe, this is all my fault. I don't know. I let my career rule me . .

MIA
J, baby you're scaring me.

Mia will die if she hears the truth. Robin gets tense.

JORDAN
It's Lance. He . . .

ROBIN
. . . he's running late, Mia.

Jordan looks at Robin in mad confusion and some derision.

ROBIN
I'm Robin. Nice to meet you.

Jordan shakes her hand with trepidation. Robin feigns a smile.

MIA
Running late?

ROBIN
Um yeah. That's what I uh came in here to tell you. He's just running a little late. But he's here now. Right, Kend- I mean, Jordan?

JORDAN
Yeah. He's here, but . . .

ROBIN
And he knows how important this is to you. You see Harper told me all about last night. The guys just got a little wild at the bachelor party. You know, boys will be boys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIA
Well, they better have been on their best behavior.

ROBIN
Oh, I'm sure of it, Mia. I'm sure.

She looks directly at Jordan who has to look away.

ROBIN
So, we have a little C.P. time for now. But they'll wait for you.

MIA
Yeah. That's right. This is my day. Calm down, Jordan. I need you to keep your head today.

Jordan just nods as she and Robin exchange looks. Mia smiles and stares at Robin. She gets self-conscious.

MIA
Girl, I'm sorry, but Harper is a lucky man. You got it going on. Your style is so cute.

ROBIN
Oh. Thanks. But I didn't really get to finish my girly stuff . . .

MIA
Well, honey. Let's get you dolled up like you want. We got a little time.

Robin smiles at her as Mia whisks her away. Jordan is clearly still worried about the bigger picture.

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Murch and Quentin continue peeking through the door as Lance stands defiantly in the room facing Harper. With clenched fists he looks as far as one can look from praying. To say Harper is shitting bricks would be a gross understatement.

HARPER
Just pray whenever you feel it, man.

Lance stares until Harper gets the idea to grab a Bible.

HARPER
Which chapters, L?

LANCE
How about Exodus 20:14.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER
(searching)
Great. Here it is. "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery."

Lance's stare is ice-cold. Murch and Quentin look at each other and shake their heads.

HARPER
Okay. Look, L. I'm just trying to stop you from making a big mistake.

LANCE
By running up in my woman?

HARPER
Is that all you wanna hear?

LANCE
I want the truth.

HARPER
You don't want that . . .

LANCE
You can't hurt me any more than you have already. I want to know.

HARPER
No, you don't, man! All you . . !
(deep breath)
All you want to hear is how great a running back you are, how grounded you are in the Lord, and that your bride-to-be is perfect. But the truth is you need to get better at 3rd down completions, you haven't always practiced what you preached, and Mia slept with your best man a long, long time ago.

Lance grabs Harper by the collar and slams him against the wall.

LANCE
(seething)
Y'know I could've killed you last night. I still could now.

HARPER
But that's not gonna change a thing, Lance. I made a terrible mistake, and I'm sorry. I would give my right arm for it not to have happened. But it did. It just . . happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANCE
I suppose you just lost control?

Harper can't answer that. Lance releases him with a shove.

HARPER
Come on, Lance, you said you'd forgive her if she ever . . .

LANCE
So now I'm a hypocrite?!

HARPER
You're just not being realistic, Lance. This is reality, man. This isn't the Bible. It's the real world. And the real world ain't about perfections or ideals. But Mia is as close to perfection as you're gonna get in this world. That ideal woman that we're all looking for doesn't exist. We play the hand we're dealt and make it work.

LANCE
You got all the answers don't you? Everything is so damn logical, ain't it? You got balls telling me how I should feel about all of this. How to live in the world? Nigga, please. You don't live in the real Godammed world either!

HARPER
L, come on. We're in a church . . .

LANCE
You can't control me. Harp! I ain't one of your characters. This ain't one of your stories. You can't control this outcome. You are not God! That's reality, Harper.

HARPER
(desperate)
Lance, just listen to reason . . .

Lance screams as he flips over the pastor's desk. There is nothing but silence between them. Harper is out of options.

LANCE
(quietly)
I knew. Always in the back of my mind I knew she'd been with someone else. But never in a million

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LANCE (continued)
lifetimes did I think you'd be that self-serving back-stabbing bastard.

HARPER
Lance, you can hate me forever, but not Mia. She loves you, man. She's crazy about you. Your ideal woman is staring you in the face and . . .
(pause)
. . . you're made for each other . .
(thinking)
You two just fit together.

Harper and Lance are thinking now. Quentin & Murch wait.

LANCE
(long pause)
She's my earth, my queen. You know?

HARPER
Yeah. I know.

Lance looks skyward and Harper waits. Slowly, Lance gets on his knees. Murch & Quentin pump their fists, hi-five and head toward the church. Harper sighs big relief.

HARPER
Okay, I'll get your tuxedo . . .

Lance grabs Harper's hand and squeezes it tightly.

LANCE
Harper, I'm a Christian so I have to forgive you. But it doesn't mean I have to like it.

HARPER
Okaaaay?

LANCE
You better find your way to deal with your issues too. Writing can't purge you completely. So I suggest you acknowledge Him, Harp.

HARPER
Him who?

Lance furrows his brow at him. Harper gets it.

HARPER
Oh. Uh Lance, I really think I should get that tux . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Lance crushes Harper's hand and yanks him down to his knees,.

LANCE
You promised you'd get me over that broom no matter what. Don't back out now. Recognize His strength. Respect it.

HARPER
(wincing)
Okay. Okay. Recognize. Respect.

Lance glares at Harper before bowing his head and immersing himself in silent prayer. Harper eyes him and then around the entire room. He feels very awkward and doesn't really know what to do. He looks at Lance one more time in his most heart-felt prayer. Harper then looks skyward, contemplates and makes a decison. He respectfully bows his head and prays as best he can.

INT. FIRST AME -- DAY

The church organ plays as Lance, Harper, Quentin, Murch and the other groomsmen stand at attention. Jordan comes down the aisle. She and Harper share a look. Harper crosses his fingers and she just cuts her eyes at him.

Harper notices Robin sitting in the pews and she is more together than we've ever seen her. He smiles proudly at how beautiful she looks and is. She makes eye-contact him and the look on his face communicates his compliment. She smiles slightly and turns away to Mia coming down the aisle.

Mia is an angel. Her dress is stunning virgin white, her make-up is flawless, her hair is perfect, and her smiling face beams as she looks at her husband to be. Meanwhile, Lance trembles.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

(Flashback) Harper and Mia have sex in a doggy style position.

MIA
Ohh, Harper . . .

INT. FIRST AME -- DAY

Lance blinks hard as if his eyes sting him.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

(Flashback) Mia sits on top of Harper grinding him heavily.

MIA
Mmmmmmm.

INT. FIRST AME -- DAY

Mia looks at Lance in adoration. Tears start streaming down his face. Mia sees him and she fights back her own tears, but they start running anyway. Lance's aunts try to hold back their emotions. The bridesmaids start doing the same as Mia gets to the altar.

PASTOR
Dearly beloved we are gathered here today in the sight of God to join this man and this woman in holy-matrimony. If any person can show just cause of why these two should not be married let him speak now or forever hold his peace . . .

The groomsmen and Jordan wait with baited breath. Robin is on the edge of her seat. Harper puts a hand on Lance's shoulder but Lance shakes it off. Lance forms a crooked smile and then motions for the pastor to continue. Big sighs all around.

PASTOR
The couple have written their own wedding vows that they will speak to each other and in front of you, their family and dear friends. Mia?

Jordan hands Mia her vows. Mia looks at Lance with adoration.

MIA
Lance, my friend, my love, my hero, the purest manifestation of manhood I shall ever know, I invite you this day and always to share my sacred space. The love which leads me to my hearts' joy and teaches me to be faithful to my personal truths. As I stand beside you this day, I offer you the very heart of me, filled with sacred love - pure, unconditional, and everlasting. For love bears all things, endures all things, believes all things. Love never fails, and I do love you, Lance, body, mind, and soul. May we honor all those who have come before us and all who shall follow in our unity - for ever more.

Folks weep in the pews. Lance cries like a baby. Harper pats him on the shoulder and hands him his vows. Lance takes them, looks at them, and then at Mia. Harper crosses his fingers and pleadingly looks skyward. Lance clears his throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE
(through tears)
Mia, my darling, my love, as I stand here beside you this day, know that there is nothing greater than love, for God is love. And having faith in you and belief in our love makes life worth living. In this world of uncertainties, I find comfort and peaceful assurance in you. As sure as I am gazing upon your angelic face . . .

Lance nearly breaks, but he maintains his composure.

LANCE
I am made whole today. A man with a higher purpose, for a woman's virtue is a man's greatest glory. From this day forth we will love one another as God loves us, accepting and passing on the torch of life, the light of the world.

Lance bawls, as does Mia, the wedding party, the pastor, Robin and the entire church.

PASTOR
(choked up)
By the powers invested in me I now pronounce you, husband and wife. Please kiss your bride.

He does. There isn't a dry eye in the house. Lance and Mia turn toward the wedding guests and jump the broom. They walk down the aisle and the wedding party follows. Cameras snap and flash.

EXT. DC HARBOR -- DAY

A montage of wedding photos of the bride and groom, wedding party, parents and the like are terrible because everyone is crying except for the last photo of Harper and Jordan who smirk.

INT. RECEPTION (SPIVEY GRAND BALLROOM) -- NIGHT

Lance and Mia receive congratulations, but Lance is still going through inner turmoil. Robin comes in and hugs Mia.

MIA
Ohh, thank you for coming, Robin. Lance, this is Harper's girlfriend.

Robin hugs Lance who gives her the once over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN
Congratulations you two. It was a beautiful ceremony. Beautiful vows.

LANCE
Thanks.

MIA
Come on, girl let me show you to your table.

Mia leads her away. Harper (at the bar) sees them passing through the room, but he fails to make eye-contact with Robin. When he makes eye contact with Jordan she averts her gaze. He turns his attentions back to his 4th attempt at his best man speech which he promptly balls up. Along comes Quentin ordering a drink. The fellas stare at each other and share an awkward pause.

HARPER
Q, I . . .

QUENTIN
Listen, Harp . .

They both laugh.

HARPER
Sorry. Quentin, I just wanted . . .

QUENTIN
Don't mention it, shorty. It was for the best. You did good. Sorry, 'bout those verbal jabs last night.

HARPER
Q, I deserved them.

QUENTIN
I guess we really even now. huh?

HARPER
Brother-man, I owe you plenty.

QUENTIN
Yeah? Well in that case, you think you could get a nig - get a brotha a interview with Hugh Heffner. 'Cuz you know I always wanted to get paid to photograph nekkid honeys. Tastefully done, of course.

HARPER
Of course. I'll see what I can do.

QUENTIN
Sounds like a plan, shorty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He pats Harper on the shoulder and orders a drink. Harper shakes his head and smiles.

INT. RECEPTION -- DAY

(Later) Robin has Uncle Skeeter and the rest of the her table laughing. Conversely, Shelby is having a miserable time as she downs her 5th glass of champagne. Over at the dais the wedding party eats dinner. Candy and Murch enjoy each other's company.

CANDY
Julian, it was really sweet of you to invite me. Thank you so much.

MURCH
Did you get enough to eat? Are you having a good time?

CANDY
You've got to stop doting on me so much. A girl could get used to that.

MURCH
Oh, really?

CANDY
Oh, yes. Besides, I'm very maternal. To nurture is my nature. So let me take care of you now. You want some more roast beef *au jus* ?

Murch smiles and hugs her. Nearby Mia gazes into Lance's eyes.

MIA
Oh, honey. You were so sweet today. Those wedding photos are going to be horrible, but I wouldn't change it for the world.

LANCE
I'm just so . . . happy, Mia.

MIA
Ohhhh.

Harper rings his glass with his fork. All eyes are on him. Mia smiles and Lance glares. Robin listens attentively as does Jordan. Quentin takes Harper's prepared speech from him and balls it up. Harper looks a bit nervous without it. Quentin pats his own heart. All eyes are on Harper. Long pause.

HARPER
Mia gave me too much credit for this union. Because I am the one who has learned from them what it means to

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER (continued)
truly commit to another person. To accept a friend's faults at face value and thank them for the joy, the pain, and the drama that comes with those faults. They've taught me the importance of seizing the moment. Because we don't always recognize nor appreciate the good things that we have until time has us passed by.

Robin starts to get misty.

HARPER
But we can never go back. We live for today. Not for what was or what could have been.

Jordan contemplates and slowly nods her head.

HARPER
And what will be, no one can say. But sometimes you just have to step out on faith . . .

Mia smiles. Lance loosens up and does the same.

HARPER
And believe that what you've built together is worth preserving. When you are made for one another as much as these two are . . .

With moist eyes he looks directly at Robin.

HARPER
It's definitely worth preserving.
(pause)
To the bride and groom. Mia, Lance, I love you both. I wish both of you eternal joy. May God bless your union.

Everyone claps. Harper takes his seat and wipes his tears. Robin has lost it completely. Jordan smiles, applauds, and wipes her tears. Quentin gives him a thumbs up. Mia and Lance look down the table at Harper. Mia blows him a kiss. Lance gives him the power fist. Harper acknowledges them both. Lance looks at Mia, hugs her tight and kisses her temple and forehead. Harper looks through the standing ovation for Robin but she's nowhere to be found. He is disappointed.

INT. RECEPTION -- NIGHT

All of the single women bunch up in a crowd readying themselves for Mia's bouquet. Shelby eases her way into the crowd and gets right into the thick of things. Mia tosses the bouquet over her head and Shelby slyly and forcefully nudges a young lady out of the bouquet's trajectory to grab it. The young lady is stunned and quizzically looks at Shelby who expresses no shame. She holds up the bouquet triumphantly and walks away.

WEDDING COORDINATOR
Alright now. All the fellas. Come on. Catch the garter.

No guys move at all.

WEDDING COORDINATOR
Oh, don't be that way. Come on now.

Guys reluctantly stand in a crowd with their hands in their pockets. All the ladies laugh and shake their heads at them. Quentin, and Harper stand in the back laughing about Shelby.

Lance tosses the garter over his head. It flies through the air and the guys part like the Red Sea as it descends. Harper instinctively reaches for it, but bumps Quentin's hand on the way up and like a magnet to steel Quentin's hand catches the garter. The whole room goes wild as Quentin looks up to see Shelby across the room dreading the next part of the ceremony. They both get dragged to the middle of the dance floor. Shelby sits in a chair with her arms folded. The band strikes up a romantic ballad. The fellas chant "Q,Q,Q,Q,Q." She eyeballs him evilly. Realizing he has a crowd he smirks and gets down on one knee with the garter. Everyone laughs hysterically. Quentin slips off Shelby's shoe sensuously.

SHELBY
Just put it on, Quentin.

QUENTIN
Don't rush me now, baby.

He caresses her calf. Everyone hoots and hollers. She smacks his hand away.

SHELBY
Cut it out.

Quentin stretches the garter playfully over his nose and chin. The place goes bananas. He lifts Shelby's foot to his mouth and clenches his teeth gently on her big toe. He closes his lips on her toe and the garter rolls on to her foot. Shelby is getting turned on, but is very self-conscious of the crowd.

SHELBY
Quentin! Stop it. I'm not playing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Quentin just looks in her eyes and rolls the garter up her thigh. The higher he gets the more people start to whoop and holler. Shelby breaks out of her momentary daze, pushes Quentin away and runs to the other room. Everyone applauds as Quentin takes a bow. He chases after her. Jordan comes over to Harper.

HARPER
Go get her, Q!

JORDAN
Quentin better look out. Shelby'll put a hurting on him.

HARPER
Now that would be the oddest couple since Felix and Oscar.

JORDAN
True indeed, my brother.

They exchange looks and then smile.

HARPER
Hey, uh have you seen Robin?

JORDAN
She's not far. Believe me.

Harper looks around the room and she's nowhere in sight.

JORDAN
Come on and dance with me?

Harper hesistates.

JORDAN
I just want to talk to you a minute.

Harper nods and takes her by the hand and they dance closely. Across the room Robin emerges from the ladies room wiping away her remaining tears. She sees Harper and Jordan, but before she gets too upset here comes Uncle Skeeter:

UNCLE SKEETER
Cut a rug with a war vet, darlin'?

ROBIN
Sure, Uncle Skeeter.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Quentin has cornered Shelby. She is pacing, trying to get away from him, but he keeps cutting her off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUENTIN
Why you wanna be that way?

Finally, she stops and stands with her arms folded.

SHELBY
I don't get turned on by silly games.

QUENTIN
Who said anything about turning you on?

SHELBY
I suppose that's your idea of fun?

QUENTIN
Hell yeah. Girl, please. I wouldn't even try turning you on. I'd need a bonfire just to thaw you out.

SHELBY
I'm not that frigid.

QUENTIN
You had me fooled.

SHELBY
That doesn't seem too difficult.

QUENTIN
Touche. Touche.

A waiter comes around with a tray of champagne in glasses. Quentin grabs two. He offers one to Shelby.

SHELBY
Thank you.

QUENTIN
(charming)
You're welcome.

INT. BALLROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan and Harper slow dance as they watch the loving newlyweds across the floor do the same.

JORDAN
That was a good speech, Harper.

HARPER
Thanks. I winged it.

CONTINUED:

JORDAN
It was heartfelt and sincere. We all felt it. Damn, this has been an emotional-ass weekend.

HARPER
A roller-coaster ride, J.
(beat)
Jordan, about last night . . .

JORDAN
(looking at him)
Harper. Last night never happened. And if I ever hear it mentioned, I swear I'm selling what I know to the Inquirer. You got me?

HARPER
Loud and clear, Ms Armstrong. Loud and clear.

Harper kisses her on the forehead. She is appreciative and hugs him tighter. Nearby, Robin dances with Uncle Skeeter. Harper wistfully observes her laughing, being charming, and fending off Skeeter's advances. Jordan notices him.

JORDAN
I saw you reach for that garter.

Harper smiles at her.

JORDAN
I don't blame you. She's the woman. Don't blow it. I love you, Harper.

Jordan kisses him on the cheek and brushes his face tenderly. She and walks over to Robin and Skeeter.

JORDAN
Listen, I hate to interrupt, Robin. But Uncle Skeeter promised to save me a dance and he's the only available man up in here, anyway.

She and Robin exchange respectful looks.

UNCLE SKEETER
Come on with it, baby-girl. You don't mind do you, darlin'?

ROBIN
No, not at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN
Thanks, Robin. I owe you. Listen, I think the best man wants to see you.

Robin sees Harper standing and waiting for her. She turns back to Jordan who gives her a small nod and smile.

JORDAN
Watch those hands now, Skeeter . . .

Robin smiles and chuckles having experienced the same groping. Harper comes over to her. They stand apart for a moment.

HARPER
Hi.

ROBIN
Hey.

They pull together cautiously not really knowing what to say.

HARPER
Thanks for your help today.

ROBIN
You're welcome. Great speech. I was . . . moved.

HARPER
I meant what I said up there. What we have is worth preserving and . .

ROBIN
Harper, I don't think that this is the right time. We have a lot to talk about, and it's not going to be solved overnight. There are things to figure . . .

HARPER
You know what your problem is, Robin? You don't live enough for today.

ROBIN
What . . ?

HARPER
For once just enjoy the moment.

Harper takes her hand and begins to get down on one knee.

ROBIN
(self-conscious)
Harper, what are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER
At least for a little while. OK?

Harper just looks at her lovingly and sincerely. Robin is in shock.

HARPER
Robin Jones, will you marry me?

Robin is absolutely speechless and near tears. All attention is focused on the two of them.

HARPER
I love you. Please?

ROBIN
(near tears again)
"Yeah, whateva, man."

Harper gets up and hugs her. Everyone surrounding them applauds. They kiss.

INT. RECEPTION -- NIGHT

Later the band strikes up "Candy" and everyone dances. Candy and Murch dance together and she starts doing a nasty dance with a slight strip tease and looks seductively at Murch. Murch grabs her and looks around to see if anyone sees. She laughs and playfully hits him. Uncle Skeeter gets on the dance floor.

UNCLE SKEETER
I'm 'bout to get it goin', y'all.

Uncle Skeeter starts off the electric slide and everyone starts getting into it, the children, the elderly, and the wedding party. The whole party's in sync with the electric slide.

Harper gets behind Robin, presses his body against her and whispers in her ear. She smiles and widen her eyes. She nods at him and he takes her hand to lead her out of the ballroom.

FADE OUT:

INT. SPIVEY TOWERS PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- DAY

It is morning. Two figures stir awake from underneath the sheets. It is Quentin And Shelby. They wake up simultaneously, think for a moment and then turn to one another. They stare for a few beats and then jump out of bed.

BOTH
Oh shit. What have we done? Oh no.
Fuck that. I will never drink again.

END